

Proceedings of the  
57<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Cantors Assembly  
Convention



May 2 – 6, 2004

Kutsher's Country Club  
Monticello, NY

# CANTORS ASSEMBLY OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

July 1, 2003—June 30, 2004

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Presented by Rabbi Edward Feld (Jewish Theological Seminary) and Hazzan Joseph Levine

Participating Hazzanim: Israel Goldstein, Jerome Kopmar, Benjamin Maissner, Raphael Frieder, Faith Steinsnyder – The New Jersey Cantors Assembly Ensemble, Hazzan Sheldon Levin, Conductor

Accompanist: Joyce Rosenzweig



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## **57<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Cantors Assembly**

**Sunday, May 2 – Thursday, May 6, 2004**

**Kutsher's Country Club – Monticello, NY**

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### **SUNDAY, MAY 2ND**

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**12:00 – 6:00 pm .....Vendor Hours..... Tower Promenade**

**1:30 pm .....Registration..... Hotel Lobby**

**2:00 pm .....Hospitality ..... Tower 920**

**5:00 pm .....Hors D'oeuvres .....Deep End Lounge**

**6:15 pm .....Evening Services .....Launching Pad**

**מןנה: Hazzan Ralph Goren (Margate, NJ)**

**בבב'ר: Hazzan Robert Lieberman (Syracuse, NY)**

**7:00 pm .....Opening Banquet..... Main Dining Room**

**Chair: Hazzan Ralph Goren (Margate, NJ)**

**הבה נשיר: Hazzan Ralph Goren (Margate, NJ)**

**ברכת המזון: Hazzan Jeffrey Myers (Massapequa, NY)**

**8:30 pm .....Stardust Room**

**ספרית העمر: Hazzanim and their Protégés: Ilana Goldberg (Chicago, IL),**

**Rachel Hilker (Chicago, IL), Dena Propis (Houston, TX), Alexandra Roth (Princeton, NJ), Sarah Shiovitz (Briarcliff Manor, NY), Deana Stein (Akron, OH), Scott Stein (Columbus, OH)**

**Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)**

**Producer: Hazzan Murray Simon (Princeton, NJ)**

**10:30 pm .....CHAZZ'N: A Cantor's Story ..... Marquis Lounge**

**Presenter: Erik Greenberg Anjou (New York, NY)**

## MONDAY, MAY 3RD

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7:30 am .....Sportsmen's Lounge  
בעל קריאה ושרהית: Hazzan Alan Sokoloff (Mamaroneck, NY)  
Egalitarian: Hazzan Stephen Freedman (Dresher, PA)  
בעל קריאה: Hazzan Estelle Epstein (Teaneck, NJ) .....Gold Room  
דבר נגינה: Matthew Lazar (New York, NY) .....Sportsmen's Lounge

8:30 am .....Breakfast .....Main Dining Room

9:00 am – 4:30 pm .....Registration .....Hotel Lobby

11:00 am – 4:00 pm .....Hospitality .....Tower 920

9:00 am – 1:00 pm .....Vendor Hours .....Tower Promenade  
2:00 pm – 6:00 pm .....Vendor Hours  
10:00 pm – 12:00 am .....Vendor Hours

9:30 am .....Launching Pad  
**The Sephardic/Oriental Liturgical Tradition**  
Prayer in Calcutta – Hazzan Rahel Musleah (Great Neck, NY)  
Utilizing Sephardic Melodies in Our Davening – Hazzan Ramon Tasat  
(Chevy Chase, MD)  
Chair: Hazzan Farid Dardashti (New Rochelle, NY)

10:45 am .....Launching Pad  
**Prayer Curriculum and Methods**  
Curricula and Methods for Teaching Music and Tefillah in Religious and Day Schools  
Presenters: Hazzan Carol Chesler (Huntington, NY), Hazzan Sheldon Levin (Metuchen, NJ) and Hazzan Marcey Wagner (Old Brookville, NY)  
Chair: Hazzan Mimi Haselkorn (Temple City, CA)

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## MONDAY, MAY 3RD

(continued)

**12:00 pm.....Launching Pad**

**Zamru Lo: The Next Generation**

Presenters: Hazzanim Kenneth Cohen (Greenwich, CT), Arthur Katlin (Lawrenceville, NJ), Mark Kushner (Philadelphia, PA), Alan Sokoloff (Mamaroneck, NY) and Eliot Vogel (Narberth, PA)  
Chair: Hazzan Jeffrey Shiovitz (Briarcliff Manor, NY)

**1:00 pm .....Lunch.....Main Dining Room**

**ברכת המזון:** Hazzan Marla Barugel (Rumson, NJ)

**2:15 pm.....Launching Pad**

**מנחה:** Hazzan Ruth Green (Manalapan, NJ)

**2:30 pm.....Launching Pad**

**Review and Assessment of Congregational and Professional Staff Leadership:** an analysis of the new document created by the Committee on Congregational Standards now being distributed to synagogues for the purpose of evaluating professional and lay leadership

Presenter: Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg (New York, NY),

Assistant Executive Vice President, Rabbinical Assembly

Chair: Hazzan Stephen J. Stein (Akron, OH)

**3:45 pm .....Shoah Commemoration .....Launching Pad**

Hazzan Isaac Goodfriend (Atlanta, GA)

## MONDAY, MAY 3RD

(continued)

4:15 pm.....Launching Pad

**"The 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Solomon Sulzer and His Impact on American Hazzanut"**

Presenters: Akiva Zimmerman (Tel Aviv, Israel) and Matthew Lazar (New York, NY) with Mantua Singers – Cantor Benjie Schiller (White Plains, NY), Cantor Lori Corssin (West Bloomfield, MI), Hazzanx Faith Steinsnyder (East Brunswick, NJ), William Zukof (New York, NY), Hazzan Charles Osborne (Newton Centre, MA), Cantor Dan Pincus (New York, NY), Hazzan Eliot Vogel (Narberth, PA), Elliot Z. Levine (New York, NY), Cantor Mark Opatow (Long Beach, NY). Matthew Lazar (New York, NY), Conductor

Accompanist: Joyce Rosenzweig (New York, NY)

Chair: Hazzan David Lefkowitz (New York, NY)

6:00 pm ..... **מַעֲרֵיב** ..... Launching Pad

Concert **מַעֲרֵיב**: Hazzan Jeffrey Nadel (Potomac, MD)

Memorial to Departed Colleagues

**הַסְפָּד**: Hazzan Chaim Najman (Southfield, MI)

**אֶל מְלָא**: Hazzan Ephraim Sapir (Delray Beach, FL)

7:00 pm ..... **Dinner** ..... Main Dining Room

Chair: Hazzan Laurie Rimland-Bonn ((Longwood, FL)

**הַבָּה נְשִׁיר**: Hazzan Stephen Freedman (Dresher, PA)

**בָּרֶכֶת הַמּוֹזֵן**: Hazzan Gastón Bogomolni (Omaha, NE)

9:00 pm ..... **Stardust Room**

**סְפִירַת הָעָמֵר**: Hazzan Jeffrey Nadel (Potomac, MD)

**The Music of Sepharad**

Basya Schechter and Pharaoh's Daughter (New York, NY)

Zahav with Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi (Chicago, IL)

Producer: Hazzan David Propis (Houston, TX)



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## MONDAY, MAY 3RD

*(continued)*

11:30 pm ..... **Promenade Concert** ..... Marquis Lounge  
Master of Ceremonies: Hazzan Hershel Fox (Encino, CA)  
Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

**Hospitality for First Time Convention Delegates** ..... Tower 920  
An opportunity to meet the officers of the Cantors Assembly.

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## TUESDAY, MAY 4TH

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7:30 am ..... **Sportsmen's Lounge**  
ת שחרית: Hazzan Sam Weiss (Paramus, NJ)  
Egalitarian ת שחרית: Hazzan Hamid Dardashti (Cherry Hill, NJ) ..... **Gold Room**  
Torah Tips: Hazzan Richard Wolberg (Fall River, MA) ..... **Gold Room**

8:30 am ..... **Breakfast** ..... Main Dining Room

9:00 am – 4:30 pm ..... **Registration** ..... Hotel Lobby

11:00 am – 4:00 pm ..... **Hospitality** ..... Tower 920

9:00 am – 1:00 pm ..... **Vendor Hours** ..... Tower Promenade

2:00 pm – 6:00 pm ..... **Vendor Hours**

10:00 pm – 12:00 am ..... **Vendor Hours**

## TUESDAY, MAY 4TH

(continued)

**9:30 am .....57th Annual Meeting .....Launching Pad**

(Closed session; members and spouses only)

Membership Report and Induction of New Members: Hazzan Jeffrey Myers  
(Massapequa, NY)

Nominations Report: Hazzan Sheldon Levin (Metuchen, NJ)

Presentation of Commissions: Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro (Lynbrook, NY)

Fiscal Report: Hazzanim Jack Chomsky (Columbus, OH) and  
Abraham B. Shapiro (Lynbrook, NY)

Pension Update: Nina Rone, CEO, Joint Retirement Board

Mercaz Update: Rabbi Robert Golub, Mercaz USA

Executive Vice President's Report: Hazzan Stephen J. Stein (Akron, OH)

Honoring of Retirees: Presenters – Hazzanim Saul Hammerman (Baltimore,  
MD) and Morton Kula (Boca Raton, FL)

Placement Report: Hazzan Morton Shames (Springfield, MA)

Presiding: Hazzan Jacob Mendelson, President (White Plains, NY)

**11:15 am.....Launching Pad**

Samuel Rosenbaum ל"ז Memorial Lecture

**“The State of the Art: The State of Conservative Hazzanut”**

Presenter: Hazzan Henry Rosenblum (New York, NY)

Panel: Hazzanim Nancy Abramson (New York, NY), Nathan Lam  
(Los Angeles, CA), Jacob Mendelson (White Plains, NY) and

Rabbi Gordon Tucker (White Plains, NY)

Chair: Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi (Chicago, IL)

Presentation of Samuel Rosenbaum ל"ז Memorial Award

Presenter: Hazzan Saul Z. Hammerman (Baltimore, MD)

**12:45 pm.....Lunch.....Main Dining Room**

**ברכת המזון:** Hazzan Neil Schwartz (Chattanooga, TN)

**2:15 pm.....Launching Pad**

**מנחה:** Hazzan Mark Kula (Miami, FL)



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## TUESDAY, MAY 4TH

(continued)

**2:30 pm.....Launching Pad**

**"Introducing Five Piyutim from the New Conservative Mahzor: Premiere Compositions by Hazzanim Charles Davidson, Israel Goldstein, Jerome Kopmar and Benjamin Maissner"**

Presented by Rabbi Edward Feld (New York, NY), Jewish Theological Seminary, and Hazzan Joseph Levine (Philadelphia, PA)

Participating Hazzanim: Israel Goldstein (Jericho, NY), Jerome Kopmar (Dayton, OH), Benjamin Maissner (Toronto, ON), Raphael Frieder (Great Neck, NY), Faith Steinsnyder (East Brunswick, NJ) – The New Jersey Cantors Assembly Ensemble, Hazzan Sheldon Levin (Metuchen, NY), Conductor

Accompanist: Joyce Rosenzweig (New York, NY)

Chair: Hazzan Joseph Levine (Philadelphia, PA)

**4:00 pm.....Launching Pad**

**SALOMONE ROSSI: The Man and His Music**

Presenter: Matthew Lazar (New York, NY) with Mantua Singers – Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller (White Plains, NY), Cantor Lori Corssin (West Bloomfield, MI), Hazzan Faith Steinsnyder (East Brunswick, NJ), William Zukof (New York, NY), Hazzan Charles Osborne (Newton Centre, MA), Cantor Dan Pincus (New York, NY), Hazzan Eliot Vogel (Narberth, PA), Elliot Z. Levine (New York, NY), Cantor Mark Opatow (Long Beach, NY), Matthew Lazar (New York, NY), Conductor Chair: Hazzan Sam Weiss (Paramus, NJ)

**6:00 pm.....Launching Pad**

**בָּרָא: Hazzan Herschel Fox (Encino, CA)**

**Installation of Officers and Executive Council**

Presiding: Hazzan Joseph Gole (Los Angeles, CA)

## TUESDAY, MAY 4TH

(continued)

7:00 pm .....Dinner .....Main Dining Room

Chair: Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi (Chicago, IL)

הbabah נשי: Hazzan Arthur Katlin (Lawrenceville, NJ)

ברכת המזון: Hazzan Devin Goldenberg (Worcester, MA)

Presentation of Awards: Presenters – Hazzanim Abraham B. Shapiro (Lynbrook, NY) and Stephen J. Stein (Akron, OH)

Yuval Awards: Hazzanim Ivan Perlman (Boynton Beach, FL), Morton Shames (Springfield, MA) and Isaac Wall (Ventnor, NJ)

Kavod Award: Joshua Jacobson (Boston, MA)

9:00 pm .....Stardust Room

ספירת העمر: Hazzan Herschel Fox (Encino, CA)

### Hazzanim in Concert

Nancy Abramson (New York, NY), Aaron Bensoussan (Toronto, ON),  
Rebecca Carmi (Hudson, OH), Charles Osborne (Newton Centre, MA), David

Propis (Houston, TX), Efraim Sapir (Delray Beach, FL),

Israel Singer (Norwood, NJ), Cory Winter (Glenview, IL), Sarah Zemel (Harrison, NY) and Itzhak Zhrebker (Dallas, TX)

Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

Producer: Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi (Chicago, IL)

11:30 pm .....Promenade Concert .....Marquis Lounge

Master of Ceremonies: Hazzan Simon Spiro (London, England)

Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 5TH

7:30 am .....Sportsmen's Lounge

שחרית: Hazzan David Sislen (St. Petersburg, FL)

Egalitarian שחרית: Hazzan Sharon Wallach (Reisterstown, MD) ....Gold Room

Torah Tips: Hazzan Richard Wolberg (Fall River, MA)



## WEDNESDAY, MAY 5TH

(continued)

8:15 am ..... Breakfast ..... Main Dining Room

9:00 am – 1:00 pm ..... Vendor Hours ..... Tower Promenade

1:30 pm – 6:00 pm ..... Vendor Hours

10:00 pm – 12:00 am ..... Vendor Hours

9:30 am ..... Read-through of New Music ..... Launching Pad

Presenters: Joel Eglash (Transcontinental Music)

Hazzanim Josef Chazan (Mission Viejo, CA), Isaac Goodfriend (Atlanta, GA), Morton Kula (Boca Raton, FL), Morton Shames (Springfield, MA), Jeffrey Shron (Overland Park, KS), Stephen Texon (Aventura, FL) and Marcia Tilchin (Tustin, CA)

Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

Chair: Hazzan Jeffrey Shiovitz (Briarcliff Manor, NY)

11:00 am ..... Launching Pad

זה נהנה וזה לא חסר

– A Fusion of Tradition and Modernity

Presenters: Hazzanim Alisa Pomerantz-Boro (San Diego, CA), David Feuer (Palm Beach, FL), Jacob Mendelson (White Plains, NY), David Propis (Houston, TX), Faith Steinsnyder (East Brunswick, NJ)

Accompanist: Joyce Rosenzweig (New York, NY)

Chair: Hazzan Joseph Gole (Los Angeles, CA)

12:30 pm ..... Lunch ..... Main Dining Room

ברכת המזון: Hazzan Elisheva Dienstfrey (Alexandria, VA)

H.L. Miller Cantorial School Alumni Meeting and Lunch ...Gold Dining Room

2:00 pm ..... Launching Pad

מנחה: Hazzan Larry Goller (Highland Park, IL)

## **WEDNESDAY, MAY 5TH**

*(continued)*

**2:15 pm.....Launching Pad**

### **Enhancing Congregational Participation on the High Holidays**

Presenters: Hazzanim Erica Lippitz (South Orange, NJ), Moshe Schulhof

(Aventura, FL), Sol Zim (Flushing, NY)

Chair: Hazzan Alan Smolen (Elgin, IL)

**3:45 pm.....Launching Pad**

### **Practicum: Friday Night Fusion**

Presenter: Hazzan Nathan Lam (Los Angeles, CA)

Participants: Hazzanim Joel Caplan (Caldwell, NJ), David Propis (Houston, TX), David Tilman (Philadelphia, PA)

Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

**6:00 pm.....Launching Pad**

**מעריב: Hazzan Ofer Barnoy (Roslyn, NY)**

Presentation: Operation Mazel Tov – Judith Edelman-Green (Kfar Saba, Israel), Masorti

Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel

Chair: Hazzan Steven W. Dress (Sharon, MA)

**7:00 pm .....Dinner .....Main Dining Room**

Chair: Hazzan Jeffrey Shiovitz (Briardcliff Manor, NY)

Scholarship Awards: Presenter – Hazzan Jacob Mendelson (White Plains, NY)

Presentation of Paid-up Scholarships: North Suburban Synagogue Beth

El/Hazzan Larry Goller Endowment Fund, Hazzan Dov Propis Memorial

Scholarship Fund, Hazzan Abraham and Millicent Shapiro Publication Fund,

Rachel Mara Simon Memorial Fund

**הבה נשיר: Hazzan Mimi Haselkorn (Temple City, CA)**

**ברכת המזון: Hazzan Lance Tapper (Bermuda Dunes, CA)**



## WEDNESDAY, MAY 5TH

(continued)

9:00 pm.....Stardust Room

**ספרית העمر**: Hazzan Ofer Barnoy (Roslyn, NY)

### From Second Avenue to the Met

Participants: Hazzanim Roslyn Barak (San Francisco, CA), Moshe Bear (South Huntington, NY), David Feuer (Palm Beach, FL), Amy Goldstein (New York, NY), Martin Goldstein (Denver, CO), Thom King (Baltimore, MD), Kimberly Komrad (Gaithersburg, MD), Jacob Mendelson (White Plains, NY), Fredda Mendelson (Larchmont, NY), Emanuel Perlman (Baltimore, MD), Simon Spiro (London, England), Sam Weiss (Paramus, NJ)

Accompanists: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA) and Joyce Rosenzweig (New York, NY)

Producer: Hazzan Steven Stoehr (Los Angeles, CA)

11:30 pm

Dessert Reception.....Stardust Room

Promenade Concert.....Marquis Lounge

Master of Ceremonies: Hazzan Hershel Fox (Encino, CA)

Accompanist: Tova Morcos-Kliger (Los Angeles, CA)

## THURSDAY, MAY 6TH

8:00 am.....Sportsmen's Lounge

**שחרית**: Hazzan Ralph Goren (Margate, NJ)

**בעל קורא**: Hazzan Larry Vieder (Farmington Hills, MI)

**שחרית**: Hazzan Frank Lanzkron-Tamarazo (Cranford, NJ)

**בעל קריאה**: Hazzan Daniel Green (Toms River, NJ)

## THURSDAY, MAY 6TH

*(continued)*

9:00 am .....	Breakfast .....	Main Dining Room
9:00 am – 12:00 pm.....	Vendor Hours.....	Tower Promenade
10:30 am .....	Executive Council Meeting .....	Sportsmen's Lounge
1:00 pm .....	Lunch.....	Main Dining Room



## CANTORS ASSEMBLY MISSION STATEMENT

The Cantors Assembly, the largest body of Hazzanim in the world, is the professional organization of Cantors which serves the Jewish world. We are a founder and supporter of the Cantors Institute, now the H. L. Miller Cantorial School of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

We are affiliated with the Conservative Movement.

Since our founding in 1947, we have remained faithful, as clergy, to our principles:

- to help our members serve the spiritual and religious needs of their congregants
- to preserve and enhance the traditions of Jewish prayer and synagogue music
- to maintain the highest standards for our sacred calling and those who practice it

We safeguard the interests of our members by:

- providing placement services, retirement and pension programs
- publishing materials of Jewish liturgy, music and education
- fostering a spirit of collegiality, cooperation and continued professional growth
- representing Hazzanim to the Jewish and non-Jewish communities at large

We will build on the traditions of the past and will continue to inspire young people to train for the cantorate. We will teach and touch future generations of Jews through:

- Jewish liturgy, music and singing
- continued development of creative, vibrant programs
- the personal rapport our members extend to millions of adults and children.

### **"The Sephardic/Oriental Liturgical Tradition"**

Utilizing Sephardic Melodies in Our Davening – Hazzan Ramon Tasat

The first thing I'd like to say is that I think we got it right at the presentation when we talked about Sephardic and Oriental music and we separated them because, indeed, they are different. The Sephardic tradition is then the tradition that comes from the Iberian Peninsula – more specifically from Spain. For 700 years or so, Jews lived in relative peace in relationship with both the Muslim and Christian communities there until 1492 which marks the time when we were expelled from Spain and forced to move one more time to different areas throughout the Mediterranean Sea. For those of you who know European geography, some of them moved to Northern Morocco, which kisses, so to speak, Spain. There, the cities of Tetuan and Tangier are the prominent cities for the Sephardic Jews, not to be confused with the Moroccan Jews who lived in Morocco and before that in Casablanca or Meknes. Jews have settled in those cities at a much earlier time than in Northern Morocco. Some of them claim that they have been there since the time of King Solomon, not that it's proven, but it's in the image of people and that is valid, too. The Jews who arrived in Northern Morocco from Spain are called the *Megorashim* (expelled) from Castille. This is important because Spanish Jews bring a very different take to the number of already very different Jewish traditions localized in Morocco.

After the expulsion, Jews also moved to other areas around the Mediterranean Sea. In Italy, which was not a country until 1871, it was organized as city-states and therefore it was quite common for Jews to live in one city for a few decades and then be expelled by the Mayor of the city and move somewhere else. We should name cities that are prominent such as Livorno, a port that actually became really important where many, for those of you who have seen *Sifre kodesh* from the Sephardic World, you'll find out that, indeed, many of them actually were published in Livorno. Then, the Spanish Jews continued moving east to

Greece and especially to Turkey. Turkey occupies a central place in the heart of the Sephardic Jews. I should actually mention one more geographic area because it's going to be important for us to consider that some of the Jews, who were expelled from Spain went to Portugal, and about 100 years later they actually were expelled one more time from Portugal and arrived at the area of Flanders, known today as the region of Amsterdam. There, they were able to reconnect with their roots. Please imagine, for a moment, that you have been detached from your cultural roots and unable to practice Judaism for 150 years or so. It's most probable that you would have forgotten some things. For instance, some of the Spanish-Portuguese *ta'amei haMikra* were actually very similar to the ones of Northern Morocco. Later, I found out that, indeed, this was so because many Rabbis from Northern Morocco actually were invited to Amsterdam to lead this community.

This long introduction was necessary to understand that you are going to find that, similar to what occurred with the Ashkenazic community, the Sephardic community is by no means monolithic and it has different customs and traditions. The Jews who went to Amsterdam and later moved to London are called the Spanish-Portuguese Jews. The Jews in Northern Morocco are called Moroccan Jews for lack of a better name, and the Italian Jews have a number of traditions that we do not have the time to cover this morning. Finally, as I began saying earlier, Jews continued moving east to Greece, Turkey and Bosnia, i.e. to the area of the former Yugoslavia. So let's sing a little bit. I hope some of you have your folders. I chose for you a couple of examples from Turkey that show some of the *makammot*, some of those modes familiar to the Jews of Turkey. Remember, though, that the Turkish *makammot* and their Syrian counterparts are different. So this one's Turkish and this is *Yedid Nefesh*. I have written this in a way that I thought would be easier for you to be able to sing. Please notice that there are a number of embellishments that I have not included in order to make sure the music has clarity. So it goes like this.

\* \* \* \* \*

Turkish music has become normative throughout the Sephardic world. Since some of you are familiar with the differences in the text, you probably noticed that it is in the feminine instead of *vehah avdah*. I'm sure women will be happy with this. It is very common in the Sephardic world to actually have a number of words, i.e. "Nakdishakh" instead of "Nakdishkha." It probably refers to the *Shekhinah* which is feminine in Hebrew. Another characteristic of many of the musical elements of the Sephardic *piyyutim* has to do with mode. The *makkam* structure gives the appearance that the music doesn't really conclude. This trend gives people the sense that they can continue singing throughout all the stanzas, creating an atmosphere that brings you closer to the spiritual realm that hopefully we can obtain when we are praying. If you were to go to a Sephardic *Esnoga* (Shul), you would notice that the first thing that the Sephardic Jews do is to bow towards the *Aron haKodesh*, what we Sephardim call the *Hekhal*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another element that I tried to take into account when I was considering which musical excerpts to share with you this morning was to provide music that would be of use to you in your congregations or while singing at home. The next one is a *Shalom 'Alekhem*.

If you will, please look at that excerpt and you will notice that it becomes difficult to write rhythmically on the page. It's not that it is non-rhythmic music, as Idelsohn called it. It does have rhythm; it's just that the rhythm is irregular. I am referring to Idelsohn's 1929 book called "Jewish Music" where he actually uses that terminology. That was probably the only thing he got wrong. Let's see if you can see, sing with me.

\* \* \* \* \*

I think you are getting the idea. Now, let's follow a little bit of what *Rahel* did. Let's use a couple of examples for *Yigdal*. The first one is of Turkish origin that has become very familiar in Israel through the work of Yitzhak Levy. Yitzhak Levy wrote a ten-volume anthology of liturgy for the Sephardic world and I believe that *Yehoram Gaon* has recorded this as part of one of his tapes. It goes like this. You don't have it in your booklets but I think many of you have actually heard it.

\* \* \* \* \*

I think you know that. You may not be as familiar with the other "*Yigdal*" that you have in your folders.

\* \* \* \* \*

You get the gist. I brought this version of "*Yigdal*" because I thought it might be useful if you happen to conduct children's choirs or if you have a congregation that's not so familiar with the Hebrew language. Then you can take advantage of the fact that the end of every verse always repeats. I have successfully worked around that a number of times. The next example is also in your folders. I'm going to give you what the musicologists call a *contafacta*, a term that refers to the use of the melody of a particular song, generally familiar to the *Kahal*, and then apply it to a *piyyut*.

What you have in front of you is called "*Hija mía-El Adon*". "*Hija mía*" is the title of a very funny Ladino song. It tells the story of a young girl whose father tries to find her a husband. He tries very hard to introduce her to almost every man available and she rejects them all. She complains that one is too tall and she couldn't reach him, another one was too serious and she didn't like him, and so forth. Finally, the father gets very upset and introduces her to a drunkard. She then responds:

"Ah, that's the one I like." I'll sing a little bit for you and then let's apply all that to "*Ei Adon*" and see how that works.

\* \* \* \* \*

I wanted to mention a couple of things about "*Ei Adon 'al Col ha Ma'asim*" that you probably noticed and I was surprised that you didn't yet raise your hands to tell me that the text was actually wrong. For instance we sing:

\* \* \* \* \*

The Sephardic text wants to avoid anthropomorphism, it replaces the idea of being surrounded by God's glory, that is, "**Hodo**" and not "**Oto**".

Those are minor changes that I wanted to point out because I thought they would be of interest to you.

I want to go on to a couple of melodies from the Spanish-Portuguese community – "*Halelu et A' kol Goyyim*." Some people ask me how can I sing this music in my congregation because of the traditions in my own congregation. Every time I go around the country doing presentations on Sephardic music, I say the same thing – please, please be careful, be respectful with the traditions of your own *kehila*. For instance for the second day of the *hag*, you may like to sometimes include some other melodies for those *tzadikim* who come and that maybe they'll want to learn some other melodies so it makes the experience richer for them.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then another melody for the *Hallel*: "*Odekha ki Anitani*." Please remember to pronounce "*Anitáni*" and not "*Anitani*." All right, try to sing that way the next time, and of course, no one will follow you but at least you've tried.

"*Odekha ki 'Anitani*" is actually an antiphon and I thought it would be useful to you because you can ask your choir or you can have even your own congregation lead this excerpt explaining the idea that not everything flows from the *Teva*. You can actually choose two groups and we're going to do it here. I'm going to sing it once and then I'll modulate because all the baritones are going to tell me it is way too high. Right? It goes like this.

(singing)

Let's try it a little lower. So I won't be able to sing it but you will, and that's what we Hazzanim should do when we do Sephardic music – to make sure that we actually do *tzimtzum* so your congregation is able to sing it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, this is actually something this *pasuk* is translated as: "I thank God because You have answered me." So make sure you add those feelings in it, too, even if it's ten in the morning!

\* \* \* \* \*

I think this gives you an idea of how can you use this text. I think I'm going to actually skip the next excerpt. It's another tune that you find of interest from "*Rachel lastimoza*." If you like it, I'll be happy to sing it for you later. Since we all love to promote ourselves, it is part of one of my last CDs. The next one is something I think will also be of interest to you. It's called "*La Creación*" and it is actually sung during *Simhat Torah*. It is also refers to the Shabbat, and since Shabbat is coming, you may have an opportunity to teach it.

The text begins with the words:

*"El Dio dijo ke bueno era."* This is a translation of the beginning of *Bereshit*:

"...and God said that it was good"

*"mundo ke uviera"* that is, that the world would be created, *"El creo cielos i tierra haShem"* (created heaven and earth), *"dijo a la luz que fuera"* (created the light,)

*"Día primero de Shabbat"* (the first day of Shabbat)

All the days of the week are covered, and then it concludes with the words: "God who is merciful and gracious, happiness and rejoice, may we rest on Shabbat."

If you are wondering why in Ladino God is translated as "Dio" if you're familiar with the Spanish language you'll know that *haSHem* is translated as "Dios" with a final "s". God is pronounced in Ladino without an "s" because in Spanish the "s" is associated with plural and we want to make sure that it is very clear there is only one God. So here is a melody from Bosnia. I also wanted to stress something about the reality of the Sephardic culture today. You're probably familiar with Flory Jagoda, a dear friend of mine who has actually composed many melodies, some of them that have been totally killed such as like... do you know which I'm going to tell about? *"Ocho Kandelikas"* right? Will you be surprised if I tell you that the song was not conceived as a tango?

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a text in Ladino for the *Haftara* of *Tisha B'av*, taken from *Yermiahu*, the *navi* who personally experienced the destruction of *Yerushalayim*.

\* \* \* \* \*

You probably notice that the last words “*Goalenu Amonay Tzebaot Shemo kedosh Israe*l” are not included as part of the Ashkenazic ritual. Sephardic Jews include them at the end of every *haftarah* as a reaction of the ominous influence that false prophets, more specifically *Shavetay Tzevi* had on them. The idea is that there is only one Savior and He’s the one we have to actually believe in. And finally, just a little taste of the *kedusha* for Shabbat, another of those contrafactas that have their origins in Spain. After all, we had to include at least one example from Spain! This one comes from a genre that is sort of the opera’s sister, the *zarzuela*. It is entitled “*La Leyenda del beso*,” the legend of the kiss. This is how Moroccan Sephardics sing this *kedusha* for Shabbat.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to discuss with you some of the musical traditions of the Sepharadim.

**“Prayer Curriculum and Methods: Curricula and Methods for  
Teaching Music and Tefillah in Religious and Day Schools”**

Presented by Hazzan Sheldon Levin and Hazzan Marcey Wagner

Our panel is composed of Hazzanim Marcey Wagner and Sheldon Levin. A brief bio will be given for each speaker. We are not going to take questions until the end so that they have enough time to make their presentations and if there isn't time for questions, you can find them throughout the conference.

Marcey Wagner serves as Hazzan and Education Director at the Jewish Congregation of Brookville on Long Island. She is a graduate of the H.L. Miller Cantorial School with a diploma of Hazzanut and a Master of Sacred Music with a concentration in Jewish Education. Marcey has been a Jewish educator for the past 30 years and is serving as: a classroom teacher, a junior congregation leader, a trope teacher and principal. She has a certificate in Family Education from the Board of Education of New York and has served as Director of Curriculum Development for Project Etgar for the past five years, as well as many other things. Marcey is currently a member of the Cantors Assembly's Education Committee, in addition to her roles in Placement and on the Executive Council.

Our other panelist is Sheldon Levin. Sheldon has been an education director and Hazzan for over 25 years. He currently serves in that capacity at Neve Shalom in Metuchen, New Jersey. He holds degrees from Temple University and Gratz College. He was the Rosh Tefillah and Rosh Musica at Camp Ramah Poconos for several years and has been a synagogue skills teacher at SSDS for 23 years. Sheldon has edited several books on Jewish music and/or education, in addition to being the immediate Past President of the Cantors Assembly. He has served on many educational youth committees of the United Synagogue and of the Cantors Assembly. Sheldon is currently the Chair of the Cantors Assembly Education Committee.

These are our panelists. We are glad they are here. They are very, very qualified. We are going to start with Marcey Wagner.

## Marcey Wagner

Good morning! Before I get started, I do have to tell you that my colleague Michelle Friedman's birthday is today so I would like us to just give a quick happy birthday. (Everyone sings "Happy Birthday.") I actually lied; it's not her birthday. But I did that for a reason. You would have never sung Happy Birthday with *kavanah* unless I told you it was somebody's birthday. Let's all pretend it's still her birthday and I would like to put up a few questions for you to look at and ponder. I'm going to give you about 30 seconds to turn to your neighbor and answer them together.

- 1) Did singing the Happy Birthday song change your mood and, if so, how?
- 2) What if we just recited it? Would you feel the same way and why?
- 3) Why do we always sing that song together as a group and not alone?
- 4) Maybe we should change the words. What do you think?

Take one question, talk with your neighbor and see what you think.

Now, I'm going to play a musical selection for you. I seriously want you to think of a word that'll express the mood this music puts you in. (Music plays.) Now give me a word or two that sums up how that music makes you feel. (Examples come from the audience) Okay, you get the idea.

What am I doing here? To tell you honestly, when I got the title of this session, I took out my list of songs I do for music. I'm sure every single one of you has a list as well. I took a look at it. I write for the United Synagogue about Hebrew school curriculum that is aside from music. I used a very sophisticated, educational philosophy as the model for how I wrote this curriculum. When it comes to my own classroom, I really don't use it. I throw it away. I have to say I was embarrassed at myself. I can't get up in front of these people and show them my music curriculum because I think I could do a lot better.

The curriculum that I have been devoutly working on is called Project Etgar. Some of you might have seen it and some of you are even at Etgar schools. It's a project between United Synagogue and the Melton Research Center. It is student centered. It recognizes and honors student diversity. In fact, all of our students learn differently and are in different places. Most importantly it's built around core concepts. Frankly, my music curriculum was none of these things. I started sketching out what I would call the "constructivist curriculum," that is, one that determines that its goal is to engage students at a deeper level.

So I'm going to talk really quickly about what makes a curriculum meaningful to our students. This does not mean that our music curriculum is just a collection of songs. That is not what a curriculum is. We have to constantly think about why we are teaching this to our kids in the first place. The first answer that comes to us is that we want our students to develop into empowered, literate, Conservative Jews. Therefore, you have got to know the standard songs of the Jewish people, from *Hatikvah* to *Ner Li*. However, I think we can do better. I think we can still teach our cherished musical treasures but revolve it around concepts that are not simply about this particular song or this particular holiday, but concepts that are universal and are really personally meaningful for our students.

So, I talk about teaching *concepts* and not content. Let's not clump our songs according to topics such as Pesach, Shabbat or Israel, but let's use some of the beautiful, rich, deep concepts in Judaism like *Simcha*, *Shalom* or *Kol Yisrael Areveem Zeh Ba Zeh*. These are great concepts about which there are many songs, and we can group our songs in a different way. We can choose concepts that relate to the students now, such as where they are today. What are the concerns of your students today? *Shalom* is a big concern for them. Since 9/11, we are teaching different children. We have to change our curriculum to meet the needs of these children. They're different. Their understanding of the world is different. We have to look at them and then reflect our curriculum into their interests. So the lesson I started with today, was a lesson I might start with if I were teaching a unit on *simcha*. I'll come back to that in a second,

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but I want to talk about a few, little, basic, pedagogic principles. These are in your handouts so I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on them, but I think this is important. Human beings learn best when they are learning about something that matters to them. *Atsei zaytim omdim* may not matter to Robert Goldstein. You have to *make it matter*.

Learning in a conceptual way relies heavily on the visual. I'm a big believer in the simple overhead projector. If you're worried about song sheets, use an overhead projector. You don't need song sheets and every kid is looking at you and not hiding in their book.

There is also movement. There are kinesthetic learners. There are kids who have been sitting in classrooms for eight hours already. Then we expect them to come and sit for another two hours at the worst time of day. Sometimes a simple bit of movement is going to help as well.

People learn best in groups. Learning is fundamentally social. Many of you may believe that we already teach in groups, but what exactly is going on when we teach music? They are singing alone next to someone else who is singing alone. Unless they are singing parts, they really are not interacting as a group. Each individual is interacting with you. What do our older students especially like? Anything that's social or anything that gets them to talk to each other. The Etgar curriculum is filled with group projects. That simple exercise of turn-to-your-neighbor and say something or talk about something is a wonderful way to get the kids to feel that they can socialize as well as learn something about music. They learn by doing. That we do really well. We get them to sing, that is doing something, but again, the more senses we can involve, the supportive environment, I have no doubt that my colleagues provide supportive environments, but get all of the staff to be supportive.

Learning is self-directed. It's very interesting that we are using the old model of education. Our students are empty vessels and we're filling them with Jewish music knowledge. Nobody's doing that in education anymore, so why are we still doing it in music? Maybe we can give them

choices. Do they all have to learn the same songs? Maybe we give them a few choices of songs to learn. Maybe they can have some input in their education. How can we assess their learning? Well, let's grade them and make them responsible for their own learning! But that doesn't really work. Does anybody's report card really have a grade in music in it? That's why the kids fool around in music or, in the older grades, they're not interested. Even if you are a connected, wonderful, talented person, they know that nobody really cares if they learn these songs or not. Mom and Dad don't care if they learn *Atsei zaytim omdim*. They want them to behave and not be rude. Maybe if the kids work on a project and we assess them in a positive way, they'll be more responsible for the material. Learning begins where the students are and moves them forward, so be sure to know where your students are. I'm not saying that we should bring in the latest Israeli rock stuff. I'm saying we take our precious tradition and see where it fits in the lives of our students.

Learning happens best when the learners feel they can use it to make a difference. Kids want to make a difference in the world. So what can we do with our music so the kids can make a difference? Real learning is only real learning when it leaves us changed. Think about that. My music classes broke all those rules. So I would like to present a sketchy model to you. I'm always open to all kinds of feedback from you. We often teach according to topics, content as we said before, Shabbat, holiday, *Shacharit*.

A concept, and here is the definition I put up before, is a significant idea that connects to the main body of content and to the lives of the learners. A topic is a smaller, more discrete section of content that details the elements underlying the concept. You know it's a good concept when it forms bridges, when it establishes relationships, when it brings objects, events, and most importantly, when it has relevance. Then you know you hit a good concept. The critical piece is to identify these concepts, and this takes practice. For example, in the *kashrut* unit we did for Project Etgar, keeping kosher is not the core concept. That is not the concept because we know that 80% of families in Conservative synagogues do not

keep kosher. So therefore, if that were the concept, I'd lose those 80% of them right off. So we chose the concepts, identity, faith, and holiness. Those are concepts everyone can identify with, and then once we relate to that, then we move on. So Happy Birthday was the first piece that I used to introduce the concept of *simcha*.

In the *kashrut* unit, we use clips from the movie Karate Kid because karate is not about fighting, neither is *kashrut* about eating. *Simcha*, as I said before, is a core Jewish value. It's one of the best things in our arsenal. We have a great, great tradition of joy. Let's share it. The Jewish understanding of *Simcha* is vastly different from the American pop culture version, and we'll point out those differences in class. But the important thing is to start with the idea of *Simcha* that kids know, and then move on to the Jewish concept. So, for example, after our little experiment with Happy Birthday, I introduce the students to lots of different pieces of music that deal with *Simcha*: *Hava Nagila*, *Yismechu*, Psalm 150, all different versions that are all in your folders that you've got.

Again I'm not telling you to eliminate songs that you teach or add to them, but to mix up the order a little bit. After teaching a few requisite songs, I propose we take our class to the next level. Once we teach them these songs, let's make them put them to use. Make them do something with them. Do a project on them. Do something where they have to learn a new setting other than the one you taught them. Do an interpretive dance of the song you taught them, or, I have several ideas in the packet.

This is the cycle of learning based on work by Bernice McCarthy who runs an educational center called The About Learning Corporation. This is her 4MAT system. It is based in 8 parts, an 8-step cycle of learning. Right from the beginning we want to answer that kid's question, "why do I need to know this?" We want to meet them where they are now. That's why we started with Happy Birthday. Every kid understands happy birthday. Once that little seed has been planted, step two is we deal with that issue; we address and examine it. After we teach that, the second half of the wheel is *tzimtzum*, contraction of the teacher, and expansion of the

student. We as music teachers and educators rarely do *tzimtzum*. We don't let the students take responsibility for their own learning, and I'm going to give you a few ideas of how we can do that. In the second part of the wheel, say, step 6, after we've taught them a bunch of songs in our area, we're going to give them some projects to work on. Choose a song you learned and learn it in a different musical setting. I have 5 here. If one of your students can play an instrument, I have that for you. I have a great collection of tapes, go ahead and learn a new one. Take one of the songs and choreograph a dance. The kid who really wants to move...isn't that what we're getting at? We want them to understand the *ta'am*. Is it so important they know every single note? Sing a song we learned in parts. You hear these kids. A cappella is all the rage in colleges. Some of your older teenagers can do an a cappella version of something you presented to them. Do an artistic representation of the song. How many of your students are artistic? Do a dramatic reading. The kid who can't sing to save his life, can he read the words in a meaningful way? Finally, this can be an entire unit on *simcha*. I feel we need to evaluate them on these projects. You hand out what's called a rubric in the educational lingo. Basically they're guidelines, and you stick to your guidelines. You have some integrity about the work and they will have some integrity about it also. Let the students judge themselves when they present their materials. Did the students follow the teacher's directions? Was the presentation done with care? Was the delivery respectful of the material? Did the students use creativity and thought? Why can't our students in our music classes deal with our tradition in the same respectful way? I think they can. I think they deserve that. I think that we can start to rethink the demands we make of our students and of ourselves. I know I have. I think our precious musical heritage deserves that.

### Sheldon Levin

I'll point out that the name of the session is about teaching *tefillah* and none of us have been talking about it, so I'm going to do at least a quick comment on it. Marcey Wagner and I are representatives of the Cantors Assembly to the Melton Center. In the next five years, they will be

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producing an entirely new curriculum complimentary to school-grades Kindergarten on up. The Cantors Assembly is literally taking the lead and we need you. We are going to help design prayer curricula for every grade of every afternoon Hebrew school throughout the country. It is available on Hazzanet, although it can be hard to read, but everybody will be getting it in the mail in the next week or so. Please, if you don't know what prayers are being taught in your Hebrew school, give it to your Educational Director and get it back to me. I will specifically analyze these all summer long and then we will be meeting with people from Melton and the United Synagogue and the JEA and we are going to take the lead so that there are *tefillah* goals in all of our Hebrew schools. With your help, this will come to be.

My goal in these next few minutes that are left, is to give you some actual hands on things that you can do to make teaching songs fun for your kids. By the way, I was asked only to do Israeli oriented songs so that's all I'm going to demonstrate today. Right now, pretend that you are all little kids between the ages of 3-6. Let's all sing "*Oseh Shalom*" and when I give specific signals, you have to sing it either really loudly or very softly. Another example is with the song "*Am Yisrael Chai*." Whenever you say the word "*Chai*" you are going to jump up and try to reach one of these ceiling tiles. You don't need a guitar or shakers, you just need to have fun with the kids.

I started with those because I figured everybody knows those songs already, so it's really easy. You don't need any brand new songs, but now I'm going to introduce a song that many of you probably don't know. It's by Neely Rabinowitz from a book called *Eighteen Songs Chai* from Tara Publications. Again, remember you are 3 or 4 or 5 years old. Whenever we say the word "*degel*" you have to raise your *degel* way up in the air. And when you don't say the word "*degel*," any other word, put it down. (Singing) "Yesh Li Degel, Eizeh Degel, Degel Degel Degel Li...Degel Yisrael." The thing is, even your 3-year-olds, after doing this a few times, will know what a *degel* is. When my son was three, we visited Israel and he knew this song. Unfortunately for the rest of the family, every time he

saw the Israeli flag he sang this song. He sang it 1,000 times a day, but it is fun. For Debbie Friedman's song, "*Yom Huledet Sameach Happy Birthday*", if you have flags when we get to "*Yom Huledet*" wave the flags from right to left. (Singing: "*Yom Huledet Sameach Happy Birthday...*") For "*Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu*" pretend you are in a rock band and you are playing air guitar, drums, or whatever other instrument you want, but you have to do it with great feeling and a lot of energy. (Singing: *Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu...*)

We know that young kids will do whatever you tell them. What do we do when they become 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders and they start becoming less interested in singing? There is a song sheet that I put into your loose-leaf book. One thing I strongly suggest, and this does apply to *tefillah* and not just Israeli or Holiday songs. I like to teach my kids multiple melodies whenever possible, and then once they've learned at least two or even three melodies, I ask them to pick which version they want. Sometimes, to help them vote, I'll quickly sing through all three versions again. I teach different songs different weeks, and then on the 4<sup>th</sup> week they get to vote on which song it is. When it's their class Shabbat, they will pick which melodies we are going to use for their family service. This way they feel empowered. Even by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, children want to know they have some sense of control. They want to help be in charge. This is a way of teaching multiple melodies. In the future, they will not be like their parents, who only want to sing their one and only favorite *Adon Olam*. Also, if they visit someone else's shul or summer camp or Shabbaton, they'll feel comfortable there and not say "They did it the wrong way" or "I'm doing it the wrong way" because there are lots of right ways.

Carol talked a little bit about hand motions. I find it's much better to have one of the students lead these hand motions, rather than me (the old person teaching the songs). They'll learn it from me, but it's so much better if they see one of their peers doing it. Another problem I find with a lot of my Hebrew School kids in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade is that many songs have too many Hebrew words and there just isn't enough time to teach them all these words. Is Shimon Gewirtz here today? Shimon is a member of the

Cantors Assembly who has this amazing gift for taking Israeli songs and writing a singable English version of them. Shimon is in the Cantors Assembly Directory and I'm sure he would be happy to share them with you. You can personally do that with a lot of songs. You let the kids pick the songs. You give them a song sheet with 10 songs on it that you want them to work on and let them pick. Again, this empowers them.

The hardest group is the teenagers, or even the preteens (grades 6 and 7). They come to class with the attitude of "Make me sing" or "I dare you to get me to like to do this." Now, the real trick is for it to be totally teen-centered. So if you can get them to go to a USY Shabbaton, to Israel trips, to Camp Ramah in the summer, they will come back singing. Then use those kids to run the *ruach* sessions. They will design the lesson and lead the songs that they want to teach to their friends, who in turn will participate. I have three teenagers. I know that I'm a totally different generation. You guys think I'm young; I'm old, and my kids know that I'm old. And it doesn't matter how much energy I give it, I'm not a teenager. But if you get a teenager or a group of teenagers who are the "cool kids" leading the songs then you really have a great thing.

I know I'm just about out of time. I want to expose you to two other things that you may have not known about. On this beige song sheet that I've given you, there are 2 video DVDs, which are also musical CDs, of them. The first is a song from "Chazak Amenu: We Stand As One." It includes 40 or so songs of rock musicians, many of them Americans and some Israelis. If you buy the CD set, it comes with a music video on the CD, so I'm going to show you about one minute of the music video. Feel free to sing along if you can, and try to wave your hands if you can.

The other CD is a single musical video on a DVD by Rick Recht. It's called "The Hope" and it's Rick's rock version of the themes of *Hatikvah*. The song takes five minutes. So sing along a little. It's very, very impressive and your older kids will identify with the musical style, the rock beat and the teens in the video who are showing their great love for Israel and for singing.

**"Review and Assessment of Congregational and Professional Staff Leadership: An Analysis of the New Document Created by the Committee on Congregational Standards Now Being Distributed to Synagogues For the Purpose of Evaluating Professional and Lay Leadership"**

Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg, Rabbinical Assembly

Good Afternoon! Let's talk a little bit about assessment. A few years ago, there was someone I met who is a very successful professional in human resources who worked for a company that had tens-of-thousands of employees. I was concerned about evaluations and assessments and I asked him how his company did it. His response was "not well." That was very informative.

Doing an assessment is an incredibly difficult task. In our world, it is also a controversial task. Your first question is whether or not the people you work with have the ability to make a fair assessment? I think that's an honest question. I know there are many members of my organization who are pretty angry with me because I co-authored this document. They have a point, so I want to give you some background on how this document came to be.

I saw the document that the United Synagogue was sending out. Nobody had reviewed it. I was so enraged by what I saw. The process was that your synagogue does an assessment of someone in your congregation. Then they send it to United Synagogue's Program Bank. It sounds great, except that nobody evaluates it. Then in the future, someone decides that they want to assess their cantor and they contact United Synagogue to get what they have. This document is then sent out without being reviewed, revised or approved. I had a lot of trouble with that; therefore, I decided to do my homework about assessment; how it works and what it is. Then I participated in it. Therefore, I was involved in a controversy because many were questioning whether we should or should not be



involved. I told them all that it was happening anyway and I wanted to be able to say what was a fair and objective assessment.

I believe that the tool you have in front of you is a fair assessment tool. It's not perfect, but it's not bad. Ultimately, the people at United Synagogue did a very good job agreeing on the issues once they worked on it. So I want you to know about what I have learned from this whole process and what you need to know about assessments.

Why isn't a survey a good tool in assessing people? Why shouldn't a survey be sent to the entire congregation asking people to rate from 1-5 how someone performs their duties? There is an incredible amount of statistical information that says that surveys are inaccurate. What you really get is a skewed picture of the extreme; those who really love something and those who really hate it. Those are the kinds of responses that you normally receive from surveys. It doesn't reflect the whole body.

A rating scale, like from 1 to 5, is not good because it belies how complex the situation really is. It doesn't get into any depth. It's superficial. Therefore, you need to come up with some kind of system that is not a survey mailed out to everybody based on a rating scale if you really want to get underneath to what's important.

Next, there are really two kinds of assessments that take place in the world in general. One's called summative, from summary, and one's called formative.

Summative assessment is whether or not someone showed up to teach class. Was the material taught as it was supposed to be? Did the class get dismissed on time? A formative assessment would be whether or not the kids were inspired. Did the kids leave class thinking that someday they would want to become a rabbi? Was their attitude towards Judaism enriched by the experience? Formative assessments are a lot harder to evaluate. When doing an assessment, it needs to be decided which kind of assessment is being done. Is it someone doing the job or is it the extras that are involved in the job that really count? Most of the time the

assessment is not about how the job is being done or whether you are competent. 99% of you are competent. You know the *nusah*. You know what time services start on Shabbat morning. It's really the other things that people are evaluating, but they're using the wrong tool. They're using the summative tool for the formative evaluation and that's where the process breaks down. So another kind of process needs to be involved.

What this should really be about is self-improvement, not about whether we did the job or not. It should be done in such a way that is not threatening, is helpful and provides insight on what could be done differently. The information needs to be gathered and presented to us in a way that is helpful instead of critical. In general, giving criticism is a great skill that most people don't do very well, especially when they may have other kinds of baggage attached to it. You don't want the assessment to be a survey or a rating scale. You want it to be a tool that is formative and helps us gain insight on how we will improve.

One of the two biggest triumphs of this document is about self-reflection. One of the things that is hardest to do in the rabbinate is to be self-aware and to honestly evaluate how you are really doing. Why is that hard? First of all, there is not a lot of value attached to it. There are also all these people walking around telling us to our faces how great we are. "Wonderful sermon, Rabbi! I've never been to a *shul* where the sermon was so terrific!" You hear a lot of things like that, especially when they are visiting for a *bar mitzvah* and they don't like the rabbi from where they are. So in your busy day where there are so many things that need to be done, how can you get a couple of moments to sit down and think about whether you accomplished what you wanted? Self-reflection is a critical tool that is just hard to come by, but it is incredibly valuable. Therefore, the first step this document says that everyone should do is his or her

own self-evaluation/self assessment on a regular basis. You must honestly think about what you are really doing. Are you comfortable with your priorities? You must create a context where it is valued and it means something.

Do any of you have a clergy or cantor liaison committee? You need to separate what a Personnel Committee and a Liaison Committee does. A Liaison Committee should help the cantor or rabbi be self-reflective. They should not be evaluating them. Ideally, you would do your own self-assessment. Then you would find a group of people who you work with and trust and give them your self-assessment. Then you ask them how it compares to their perception of how you are doing. You need this because getting to our own depth of honesty is very hard. So find someone who can give you honesty that has no other consequence to it, i.e., they should not be on the board and they should not be someone who will be voting on your next contract. They need to care and be loyal to you and not to the congregation. That's hopefully what you have in a liaison committee.

The second triumph of this document is that it asks the congregation to do an assessment of itself. I was a pulpit rabbi for almost 15 years. I once tried to have a retreat whose purpose was to reflect on how we're doing. The answer that I got was that they were too busy. Have you ever tried to have a conversation about how the congregation is doing at a board meeting? The standard answer is that there is no time for that. It's the professionals in the Conservative movement who recommended that synagogues to do a self-assessment of how the synagogue and the board are doing. Does the board know what the synagogue goals are? This document demands that in order to do a clergy review, they need to do a synagogue review first.

In the business world, this is common sense. The CEO has to be in sync with what the priorities of the corporation are. He should not be doing his

own thing or not know what they even are. Some of you may see the literature from the Alban Institute that is an ecumenical think-tank about clergy. In the last few months, they published a book by Jill Hudson about reviewing ministers. In it, she makes one statement that is absolutely incredible. She studied about 50 different congregations and asked them about how they did assessments of their clergy. She said that not a single

one did an assessment of the volunteers. So, we are in a culture that the only thing that gets assessed is how well the hazzan sang *Kol Nidrei*. That's it. It is not whether there's a membership committee that had some sense about what kind of members they want to recruit or even if this was a priority at all. Maybe the cantor is not doing a good job because he's not on the membership committee, but the cantor doesn't know that.

It is very important that the synagogue must first have some sense of who they are. We cannot be assessed independently. It must be part of a context and a part of a team. This document states how exactly it takes place. The synagogue has to first sit down and analyze what its priorities are and how they are doing.

I want to make a couple of comments about some of the critical things that I learned about assessments. How many congregations do you have? Most will say one, but that is not completely correct. You have the hazzan's relationship with the *Minyan*. You have the relationship with the Shabbat morning regulars. You have those who you taught adult *bar mitzvah* class who never learned how to read Torah who are now able to read Torah. How many congregations do you have now? It's growing. Which is the most important one? It may vary from congregation to congregation. Part of when an assessment is done, the conception is that there are really subgroups and members of those subgroups will have a different relationship with the professional. It is important for the synagogue to be able to discern which one of the groups is more important than the other. Everyone makes demands on his professionals and all of those demands cannot be answered. There needs to be some prioritization. The synagogue needs to negotiate that. You must represent that you are the professional for more than one congregation.

There is a very big difference between satisfaction and non-satisfaction. They are not the same thing. I'll give you an example. You lower the level of dissatisfaction when you make sure there are enough seats in the sanctuary so that people feel comfortable there. But if the room doesn't have a fresh look to it or hasn't been newly painted, people don't leave

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services inspired or satisfied. The level of non-satisfaction will never change into a level of satisfaction. There are all kinds of studies about what causes a rise in levels of satisfaction. They all have to do with relationship building. So when you teach adult *bar/bat mitzvah*, you are not just teaching adults who did not have a *bar mitzvah* when they were 13, you are establishing a bond and a personal relationship with them. It doesn't matter if they get the notes perfect. It matters that they feel they have a relationship with you. If all you've done is make sure they learned the proper *trope*, you may lower their level of dissatisfaction, but you will never make them feel satisfied. Satisfaction issues have to do with personal relationships and we are always working in parallel lines. We are always lowering levels of dissatisfaction and at the same time going to places that increase satisfaction.

Why do I say that? This may be both wrong and controversial, but it is my opinion. Lay leaders are particularly interested in lowering levels of dissatisfaction. They want to keep the complaints down. They are not having the visionary conversation of how can you help to build community, what makes for an inspiring *Musaf* or to tell you about which kid didn't read *Ashrei* correctly. You need to have both conversations. We need to push them to have conversations about satisfactions and relationships.

I want to talk about something called strengths, and the difference between strengths and weaknesses. These parallel satisfactions and dissatisfactions. What is a strength? A strength – defined by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton in a book called *Now Discover Your Strengths* published by the Gallup Organization – is something you yearn to do. In other words, when you are doing it, if you are thinking about the next time you do it, it is a strength. If you are thinking that you can't wait for it to be over, that is not a strength. A strength is something you learn quickly and is something you get a sense of personal satisfaction from.

What's a weakness? A weakness is something that you do, that you need to do, that you are not good at. It is the opposite of a strength, but it only becomes a weakness when the place where you work requires you to do

it. So let's say you are not good at supervising other people, but if nobody works for you, it doesn't matter. It's not a weakness. It doesn't even have a consequence.

Which one can you learn to do better? Which one does your Board think you can learn to do better? Your weaknesses! That's where they want you to improve. Research shows that the area where you can actually learn, grow and improve in are the things you are good at. What you will do is move from being good at it to great at it. You will never be great at something that's your weakness. You will be great at something that's already your strength. When you work at it and improve it, you can move it to levels of excellence. That is where the satisfaction comes in.

Do you know the Pareto Principle otherwise known as the 80/20 rule? This is also an important part of assessment. People think this concept grew up in Federation, where 20% of the donors give 80% of the money. New York Federation didn't invent that rule. That rule came from a 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian economist, who was Jewish, by the name of Wilfred Pareto. He was studying wealth in European communities. In the process of studying different countries, he discovered that 80% of the wealth of European countries came from 20% of the people. He was also a gardener. He discovered that when he grew pea pods, 80% of his produce came from 20% of his pea pods. From there came the Pareto Principle.

The management principle is that 80% of the things we can measure about what we do will come from 20% of our efforts. Think about that. Only 20% of what you do really counts. Think about what you're doing, where you're going, where you're showing up and where you're spending your time. 20% of it will have the greatest impact of how people will assess who you are and what you do. They're not looking at the whole package. They're only looking at 20% of it.

So I've talked about strengths and what you really need to work on and find places to display your strengths. What do you do with your weaknesses? You can't ignore them. That's why there should be a clergy

team, i.e., the assistant rabbi should be good at something the senior rabbi isn't good at doing or that the synagogue needs. Find someone else to be a complement for it, to go in and figure out some kind of support system. I know a number of rabbis who have a great difficulty in learning names and keeping track of names. Do something that will help you, whether it be to get a Rolodex, make a face book, etc. Don't just sit there and say that you are not good with names and ask people to re-introduce themselves. There are things you can do for everything that's your weakness. Figure out what it is and have a support system for it. If you have a weakness, you don't have to be good at it, you just have to be good *enough* at it. There is a big difference. It doesn't have to be good or excellent, it has to be good enough. You can do a little bit to get it to the level where it needs to be. Finally, the last thing you can do about it is stop doing it and say that it is not going to happen and that you are not going to get better at it. You don't want to do it and you are dropping it from your job definition. Everybody will be happier if you had that brutal conversation.

To summarize. What I would like is for synagogues to do an assessment of their clergy that's helpful and can give us feedback in a way that we can hear it. The goal for us is to be aware that there are things that we can learn and grow at. We needed to create a document that wasn't threatening or controversial. We needed to create something that feels supportive and healthy. I hope that this document does that. You'll let us know! We'll get feedback. People will tell us what works and doesn't work. I will conclude with the following: I think that the Cantors Assembly would agree with the Rabbinical Assembly that assessment is a good thing. We just need to figure out a way to do it that's fair and helpful.

## Shoah Commemoration

Hazzan Isaac Goodfriend

My son filled in for someone last week in a Jewish day school in order to make a presentation to the eighth and ninth graders. Another friend could not make it, so my son filled in. I asked him after he came back, "what did you say?" He knew my experiences because he lived with us all his life and he heard the stories day in and day out. He is a smart boy, if I may say so. He started with the following questions to the students: "How many of you are sick and tired of listening to a lot about the Shoah?" Ten kids raised their hands. The second question was, "How many of you finished a Seder at nine-thirty in order to watch the ball game?" Forty percent raised their hands. "How many of you know a lot about the Shoah from movies and books?" The kids looked at each other and started whispering to one another, "We saw the Anne Frank exhibit." Since that is just an exhibit, he continued with an introduction, "I'm not going to talk about the six million Jews or the one million children. I'm going to talk about one Jew. One Jew." Then he broke down and said to me, "I talked about you." Well, I was baffled by what he told me because he lived with us all his life and he saw what a survivor can do after he goes through the things that I went through. So, I would like to share with you a few episodes of my survival. One episode, which I will abbreviate, is noted in my book. Another event is more recent.

It is not my intention to provide a glimpse into the history of the survivors of the Shoah. Each and every one of the survivors has a poignant story to tell and the story must be told, so as not to diminish it. All the books that have been written and the movies that have been made cannot even scratch the surface to understand the enormity of this unimaginable tragedy we recall as survivors. It is also impossible to make other people realize the impact the Shoah has made upon us until now and will be felt for generations to come. I always wondered why I survived, not how I survived. In 1945, a friend and I in Berlin, Germany, walked out of an office and were confronted by two people, one a Canadian from the Berlin Jewish Congress and one a journalist from New York. One was writing for the Yiddish paper and asked the following question in broken Yiddish,

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"Why did you survive?" He meant to say "how" but it came out "why." I got very angry and said, "Don't bother me, I don't want to talk to you." I walked away. Had he come to me and shook my hand, and hugged me, and said, "I'm pleased to see you. I'm so happy to see you. You came back from somewhere else and were considered dead," it would have been different. But, he did not. What he wanted was probably to win the Pulitzer Prize and to write the best story on the Holocaust. Since then we began to talk because we expected something else of our hosts.

Another episode happened in Atlanta about twenty years ago. A friend of ours said, "You know something, some people moved into our street." Now, they did not belong to a synagogue, but they were Jewish. He continued, "and I don't know if I should talk to them. I don't know what kind of criminals they are. I saw a two on their hands. They are strange." I was shocked, of course, and now we are today. Elie Wiesel, in his unique eloquent manner of speech, spoke in 1975 of the survivors and talked about trying to tell their stories to the rest of the world, to America, and to the Jewish leaders of the United States. These are Elie's words, "The Holocaust no longer evokes the mystery of the forbidden. It no longer arouses fear or trembling or even outreach or compassion for you [the survivors]. This is one calamity among so many others, slightly more morbid than the others, to enter it, to leave it, and then to return to your daily work or normal occupation."

The story that I want to tell you about the Holocaust is what happened to the nine Jews hiding at the Polish farm outside of the city of my birth, Piotrokow. This is from my book. These are memories of my last *Rosh Hashanah* under the Nazis. It was September of 1944. There was a house somewhat isolated from the surrounding farmers. Nine Jews were hiding. We were five men, three women, and one little girl. Gazing through the one and only window in the room, one could see the fields on the horizon almost all clear of grain and vegetation; the farmers had already stored away for the coming winter. The sound of the autumn breeze was trying to penetrate through the windowpanes. Did it come to carry us on its wings to freedom? Or was it the weary sound of bad

tidings of the unexpected still to come? Or was it the sound of the *shofar* from a distance to announce the coming of *Rosh Hashanah*.

We did not know when the High Holidays fell that year because we did not have a calendar. Utilizing an old formula we remembered from the *cheder*, however, we figured out when *Rosh Hashanah* fell. How does one prepare himself for the Days of Awe under the existing condition under which we lived? The size of the room was eight by ten meters where we spent day and night, ate, and slept. We were always whispering, never talking in a normal voice. If one had to cough or sneeze, he or she used a pillow. The closer we got to *Rosh Hashanah*, the more traumatic it became. Our hearts and minds filled with nostalgia and memories of the not so distant past of families being together, rejoicing when the occasion required the same, or feeling awe and dignity according to our tradition. However, our minds were also preoccupied with the nutrition we did not have. The aroma of mother's gefilte fish, baked challah, the apple and honey, and other traditional dishes which were customary for all occasions were just an illusion. We were grateful to the Almighty that we had a plate of soup. I remember it well, all of us using the same tin plate, eating in shifts. We covered the holes that the plate had with the soft parts of the bread so that the soup should not escape. As for the special preparation for the High Holidays, it was an entirely different story. When one has to give an account for all his deeds, his omissions, his transgressions, and ask God for forgiveness for all sins committed, the inner struggle takes over one's emotions. For how can we, with a clear conscience, approach the Almighty on the Day of Judgment and ask forgiveness for our sins? What sins? Have not we paid enough for our sins, for all the sins, those we have committed and maybe for all the sins we might commit in the future? Are not human sacrifices of 28,000 inhabitants of that city enough? Or one hundred and sixty-two martyrs, may their memory be for a blessing, killed in cold blood in a nearby forest, among them my entire family? Is it not enough atonement? Why then pray, why bother, why even think of observing *Rosh Hashanah*? Our will to live, however, and our pride as Jews overpowered our negative thoughts. We began the reasoning of "why

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not?" Why not observe *Rosh Hashanah*? Why not pray? For no matter what fate may bring in the ensuing days, if the Nazis discover our hiding place, at least we were Jews until the very last moment of our lives. With those thoughts in mind, we, the five men crowded in the corner of the room, our backs to the crucifix on the opposite wall, and began our prayers. We prayed a bit louder than a whisper, without prayer books, so that when one would forget the text, the others would prompt him so as not to miss any of the prayers. Trembling, we tried to concentrate on the meaning of every word, each phrase, especially, when we reached *Avinu Malkenu*, "Our Father, our King, repeal the evil sentence that has been decreed against us. Our Father, our King, avenge before our eyes the blood of Thy servants. Our Father, our King, bring glory to Israel, Thy people." It really uplifted us spiritually to the highest degree that the human being can aspire to achieve. We suddenly felt like the Macabees of old, who defied their oppressors. We, too, had defied our oppressors with the only weapon we possessed – prayer – and a little invisible spark that is within all of us suddenly ignited. The Jewish spark that even the Nazis could not take from us. Those are the memories of *Yom Hazikaron*, as *Rosh Hashanah* is properly called. And a few weeks later, I was liberated by the Russian Army.

The next episode, and there is a connection, was 9/11/2001. Every one of us remembers exactly where he or she was on that morning. I remember where I was. A reporter approached me and asked how I looked at it through the eyes of a survivor? What is my reaction to this terrible thing that happened here in the United States or in the world, for that matter? Without hesitation, I answered that it was worse than the Holocaust in a way. He said, "Why do you say that? Six million people!" I said, "It does not make a difference: six million or three thousand or one. We expected it. We expected to be killed any minute, any day. It would have come; it was expected. We never thought that we would survive. It was far removed from our minds. By miracle, maybe. We thought that there would be Jews who would survive and they would be put in the circus because there would not be any other Jews around." So this was my reaction. Then, concentrating on the masses of the people running in

different directions from the scene at the Towers, I had flashbacks. It looked like people in the ghettos running from one place to the other and not knowing where they were going. And then, they kept repeating 9/11, 9/11, 9/11. I said, "Oh my God, I don't believe it, I don't believe it!" On my 9/11, one hundred and sixty people were killed. It was the ninth month of the old Hebrew calendar, where *Nissan* was the first and *Kislev* was the ninth month. The eleventh of *Kislev* is the *yahrzeit* for my family.

I kept on watching the television, flashing back and forth, and I said, "Oh my God, I don't want to see anymore." It was like a nightmare. And then I felt very, very sad because this great country of ours, the mightiest power in the world was so vulnerable. One airplane, one bomb, and look at the disaster it can bring. And then suddenly I saw rescue teams coming from all sides, the fire department, the police department, the FBI, whoever you can think of came to the scene trying to rescue everyone they could, bringing them back to life. I said, "What a difference from my 9/11. Then, nobody came. There were no rescuers." They are going to rebuild 9/11 with beautiful fountains, alleys, shops, tall buildings, and lights. It will become a tourist attraction again. My 9/11, I am still there. Only a survivor can understand this. The world does not let you forget. Just read the newspaper every day or watch the television. They will not let you forget who we are and that we are all vulnerable. Education is the key.

Last Friday afternoon, I addressed a group of four hundred children in a Christian school in Atlanta, GA. This particular area of Atlanta is a cradle of hatred. J.B. Stoner, a neo-nazi running for office, got 30,000 votes from this area. Yet, they invited me to speak to the students of the eighth and ninth grades. So I asked two questions that I usually ask, "Have you ever seen a Jew from close up? Do you have any friends who are Jewish?" Not one of them raised their hands. It is not a Jewish area, it is a real Southern rural town. I spoke for about ten minutes because they also invited four retired soldiers or officers of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marines to talk and tell their stories. The children were not studying just the Holocaust, but the Second World War history and the Holocaust was part of it. Well, I always like to talk to non-Jewish students. Afterwards,

about fifty or sixty of them lined up and asked, "Can I hug you? Can I touch you?" They will never forget. And I told them, "I am talking to you because you will take my place. You are the future witnesses. Twenty years from now, none of the survivors will be around and there will be no more eyewitness accounts. It will be all second-hand and you can say that you saw a survivor." I was rewarded by the reactions of those kids.

We should not stop observing *Yom Hashoah*. We should do it with dignity. Someone told me, "I just gave a beautiful concert about the Shoah somewhere in the South." I said, "There is nothing beautiful about a concert commemorating *Yom Hashoah*." One of the chairpersons from my hometown called me some months ago and said, "I would like to hire a quartet to play at the cemetery." I said, "Not when I am there and not while I have anything to do with it." He said, "Well, we have to have some music, it's a child of survivors." You do not have to beautify it. It is a story that has to be told, as it was, not alter it. You have to tell the truth, and those who do not understand eventually will. They are beginning now to understand. France will understand, Belgium will understand, and maybe one day the United Nations will understand. We hope and pray. It is up to us because we deal with the public. We communicate with congregations, especially with the survivors in our community. Keep close to them, do not distance yourself from them. Some of them made great contributions to the economy of this country. Today, there are very few schools that do not have a curriculum to teach the Holocaust.

Someone came up to me and said, "Cantor, I just visited your Holocaust." I knew she meant that she was in Washington and saw the museum. But to her, it was my Holocaust. I said, "It is yours, too." It is up to us. We have to talk and not be afraid. When I meet someone who recognizes my accent and says, "Where are you from?" I say that I was from Poland and that I was there during the war. I do not wait for them to ask me further questions before I say, "Yes, I am a survivor." I do not brag about it, but I am a survivor. I am a human being, and I believe in everything. I was very involved in the Civil Rights movement. We must try to do the best we can and integrate ourselves into our communities. We must not isolate

ourselves. There are people out there who should be brought closer; they will listen. Let us hope that in the future there are better days to come and those things that happened in our lifetime and in the lifetimes of our parents will never recur.



## 57th Annual Meeting for Members of the Cantors Assembly

Hazzan Stephen J. Stein  
Executive Vice President

Dear Colleagues,

My address this year was shaped by a survey, a magazine article and a book. The survey to which I refer was the release of the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey. The article from a recent issue of Time Magazine is entitled, "The Case for Staying Home." The subtitle is, "Caught between the pressures of the workplace and the demands of being a mom, more women are sticking with the kids." The book to which I refer is called, "The Rebbe's Army; Inside the World of Chabad Lubavitch."

Though the shortest of the sources I've cited, it is the population survey on which I will focus most of my attention. Many of you, I am sure, have seen the press releases from this study. In a nutshell, in 1970, 50% of those who affiliated with a synagogue chose a Conservative congregation. In 1990, that number dropped to 38% and in 2000 that number decreased again to 33%. Only 52% of those who were raised in a Conservative synagogue today belong to a Conservative congregation, according to this study. Many have switched to a Reform synagogue (32%) and some have joined an Orthodox congregation (9%). 46% of those who identified themselves as Conservative Jews in this study are over the age of 54. Overall, Conservative congregations are aging and shrinking. Smaller congregations will mean fewer synagogues that are able to afford a full-time hazzan. Only a few years ago, our primary concern was the quality of music being sung in our congregations, the infusion of participatory "pop" tunes. The concern over whether there will be jobs for our members is, I am sure you will agree, much more disturbing. So why is the Conservative movement in a state of decline? Let me give you four reasons:

- 1) From the end of World War II until the 1970s, we drew large numbers from those who left Orthodoxy. By and large, these were people who came from traditional backgrounds and who sought a synagogue that balanced traditionalism and modernity. These congregants knew how to daven, a skill found among few of our current laity. That is why current members of our synagogues are so insistent and reliant on a large dose of congregational singing. They require it in order to participate (a speech for another time). That influx from the Orthodox movement has come to a halt. The modern Orthodox movement that we used to know is virtually non-existent today. A far more rigid form of Orthodoxy has taken its place. At the same time, Conservativism has become more liberal and the gap between the two is now larger than ever. In the 50s and 60s the differences between a modern Orthodox and a typical Conservative synagogue were minimal by comparison. They amounted to mixed seating and a few English readings. Today's Orthodoxy has a much higher retention rate, coupled with a birth rate that is larger than in the rest of the Jewish community. In summary, we cannot depend on Orthodoxy to replenish our ranks.
- 2) The Conservative movement is no longer at the forefront of establishing new synagogues in suburbs, as was the case in the 50s, 60s and the early part of the 70s. Now, in areas of Jewish growth, the Reform movement is first on the scene, often followed by Chabad. Let's talk for a moment about Chabad. They have had a profound impact on world Jewry, clearly demonstrated in North America. This is an ultra Orthodox movement that attracts mainly non-Orthodox Jews. How many members of Conservative synagogues are now involved with or have been touched by Chabad? I suspect the number is quite significant. Those who attend Chabad Hanukkah and Purim parties, and Torah classes, and who end up contributing financially to Chabad are not Orthodox Jews. Chabad rabbis are seen as being altruistic. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of UAHC, chastised his own constituency during a recent annual convention. He said, "Many Jews will tell you that a Chabad rabbi was the first one to care, to really care about their spiritual lives. Why, he asked, can't Reform Jews, whose spiritual message is more appropriate to contemporary

American life, muster up the same enthusiasm?" Certainly, that observation is applicable to the Conservative movement as well. And, the impact of Chabad on the college campuses is a lecture unto itself. Any of you who have had children living on college campuses in recent years will attest to the success and influence of Chabad. You and I don't agree with or accept their religious positions, but we sure have to admire their accomplishments. They have succeeded where we have failed.

3) Third, and I think most importantly, the Conservative movement has failed to nurture an observant laity, constituents committed to the tenets of traditional Judaism. Thus, many have felt no need or obligation to remain within the fold. I am sure you have noted as I that there is little, if any, difference between the level of observance of the typical member of a Conservative synagogue and an average member of a Reform congregation. Just as those raised in Orthodoxy fled to join Conservative synagogues 50 years ago, today, the next generation, raised in Conservative synagogues are leaving us and affiliating with Reform congregations. A smaller but certainly significant number of those at the other end of the spectrum are deserting the Conservative movement and seeking Orthodox congregations where they can find like-minded Jews committed to Shabbat and kashrut.

4) Fourth, and almost as importantly, Reform congregations are more attractive to the very large number of intermarried couples. How can the Conservative movement walk that tightrope of being more appealing to intermarried couples without sacrificing our primary commitment to in-marriage? Also, their religious schools are less demanding in terms of hours per week. Youngsters are involved in more extracurricular activities than ever before.

I will tell you that I get a very real sense of worry from my colleagues and friends who sit with me on the Conservative Movement's Leadership Cabinet.

So, what are we, who constitute the Conservative Cantorate, to do while the movement's leadership, of which the CA is a part, tackles these

immense problems? I believe we would be wise to look at the worst case scenario – that the movement will continue, at least in the short run, to falter. Long term, it's anyone's guess. None of us are prophets.

In early February, Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the executive vice president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, created quite a stir by arguing in an essay that within several decades Conservative Jews likely will move either to the more liberal Reform movement or to the more traditional Orthodox world. Experience has taught me not to be a prophet. Back in the early 1970s, with the emergence of the women's movement, I was sure that Orthodoxy would decline. I was certain that the daughters of my Orthodox day school classmates would never be willing to sit on the other side of a *mechitsa*. Was I ever wrong. Orthodoxy today, aside from Chabad, is flourishing in every large city in North America. Between their large birth rate and high retention rate, Orthodoxy, in contrast to the Conservative movement, is stronger than it was in my youth. At the beginning of my speech, I referred to the recent Time Magazine article which claims that a growing number of young women want to stay at home with their children rather than pursue their careers. Having grown up in the 70s, as I witnessed changes in society that allowed for great strides in professional opportunities for women, I am astounded. Clearly the lesson to be learned is that trends tend to sway back and forth like a pendulum, changing from one generation to the next. So, in the long run, I'm not convinced that Rabbi Menitoff is correct, but I certainly worry that he might be. As many in the Leadership Cabinet of the Conservative

Movement have stated, including me, we need to develop a strong and successful strategy to ensure our future.

But, let's return to our own movement and profession. What can we do to ensure that there will be a sufficient number of jobs for our members, assuming that at least in the short term the Conservative movement will decline:

- a) Obviously, we have to try to create new jobs. I have given this task and portfolio to Nancy Abramson, our newest officer, and have made it her primary responsibility. We recently acquired, from United Synagogue, a list of all congregations with 350 families or larger. We have cross-referenced that list with our roster to determine which of these synagogues lack a hazzan. Through personal contact, we will try to encourage such congregations to engage a cantor. In truth, each year we do receive a few applications from synagogues that have not previously had a full-time hazzan and now want one. That is always encouraging. But, at the same time, we see more positions from which colleagues are retiring, synagogues that would have difficulty continuing to afford a full-time cantor because of declining membership. And so, I believe we will be able to develop some new positions, but not enough. This year's placement list was fairly strong. But, I am deeply concerned about the availability of positions in the short-term future.
  
- b) I have encouraged Henry Rosenblum, in his capacity as dean of the Miller Cantorial School, to urge some of his students to become Cantor/Educators. We need to open jobs in congregations of 250-350 families. The only way to do that is if some colleagues, especially recent graduates, are willing to assume an additional role, such as educator. Why shouldn't a new hazzan, like a new rabbi, come up through the ranks, starting in a smaller synagogue where he/she has to wear more than one hat, gaining valuable experience, and thereby earning the privilege to audition for a more prominent position? Jewish education, both among youth and adults, is *the* hot topic in Jewish communal life. There are more adults, for example, enrolled in continuing Jewish studies programs than ever before. A competent hazzan who is also a trained and skilled educator, I believe, will never want for a job.
  
- c) Perhaps, more than one congregation can share a hazzan, creating additional full-time positions.
  
- d) I would like to see more hazzanim trained with rabbinic skills, capable of becoming the sole spiritual leaders of their congregations. We

can open those types of positions because there are not enough pulpit rabbis to go around, particularly in smaller communities.

e) I know this concept is going to be particularly unpopular. But, I think we need to carefully monitor the number of new cantors we train. We don't want the supply to significantly exceed the demand. The job of a synagogue professional is tenuous enough without every cantor having to constantly worry about losing his/her job because there are plenty of others chomping at the bit, willing to take his/her position for less money. Some may ask, why do we continue to put so much effort into recruitment in light of what I have shared? The answer is that we must have an infusion of new blood in order for the profession to remain vibrant. And, if we are going to be able to persuade synagogues to engage cantors, we need to find talented and creative young men and women. So, we need to monitor the number of new cantors we train but, we should never stop looking for and urging talented young people to enter the profession.

Getting back to the Time Magazine article, I wonder if and how the trend about more working mothers wanting to stay at home will impact the Cantorate. We have some unique variables to consider. First, the entrance of women into the cantorate is still a comparatively new phenomenon, perhaps starting fifteen years after women began to make great strides gaining equality in other professions. And, the hours of a Cantor are different from those of the typical working person. A cantor can more easily arrange his/her schedule to be available to children in the mornings and early afternoons. On the other hand, we are less likely to be at home when our children return from school or to be there in the evenings to help them with their homework. Time will tell (no pun intended) whether the trend that the magazine cites will just be a blip on the radar screen and whether it will impact the Cantorate.

Getting back to the concerns at hand, I imagine many of you are thinking, "This is terrible." You know what? This is all very troubling and I don't like it either. But, we have to deal with current realities. The world in which we live changes daily. It has always been that way. My youth was very different from the childhood of my parents. My own children, now 21 and

17 remind me that I'm closer to hip replacement than to being hip. What profession remains unchanged? Look at the medical field. Like me, I'm sure all of you have close friends who are doctors. They complain about the time wasted dealing with the business aspect of their practices, time that could be better spent caring for patients. Doctors have to hire business managers to deal with the insurance companies that are dictating how much doctors will be reimbursed for office visits and procedures. Malpractice premiums are driving some doctors, such as obstetricians, out of business.

When I was growing up, after medicine, the next most prestigious profession one could choose was law. I don't think that is true anymore. The legal profession is no longer well respected except, maybe, on television. The market is flooded which may be, in part, the reason that there are so many frivolous lawsuits. Think of all the lawyer jokes. Attorneys are a dime a dozen and, yes, there are a lot of lawyers struggling to earn a living.

My brother is a computer programmer with an MBA who has been out of work for 1-1/2 years. Twenty years ago, computer programming was considered a great profession, surely one with a bright future.

Twenty-five years ago the CA told its members to learn to read Torah. The generation that produced our shamashim, primarily immigrants from Europe, was dying off. In the modern world, no one wanted to become a shamas, but congregations needed someone competent to read the Torah. Today, my guess is that half of our members read Torah in their synagogues with regularity. Some colleagues have been able to train others but still have the responsibility of making sure laypeople are prepared each week. And, these cantors have to be able to pitch in at the last minute when the laypeople don't show up.

Last year, in dealing with a colleague who had lost his job, I suggested that he apply for a position requiring that the hazzan read Torah. His response to me was that the cantor shouldn't have to read Torah. He should be able to rest his voice between Shacharit and Musaf. I told him

he was right. In my own congregation, I am fortunate to have a full-time Torah reader. But, I also told him that faced with the choice of reading Torah or being unemployed, I would read Torah. I explained to him that his first responsibility is to support his family. My first obligation, as your executive vice president, is to try to make sure that there are jobs for our members. But, many of our congregations and the positions they offer are not as strong as they once were. Maybe that will change down the road. None of us knows for certain what the future holds. As I mentioned a few years ago, trends shift back and forth, like a pendulum.

All of you came to this convention to be uplifted, so the last thing I want is for you to leave this meeting depressed. Despite everything I have told you this morning, I remain guardedly optimistic about the future of our profession for two reasons. First, I am impressed by the talent of the current crop of students in the Miller Cantorial School. Second, all of the studies that have been conducted about the synagogue of the future recognize the centrality of music to a vibrant congregation.

As for our Movement, I see reasons for optimism there as well. There are more children from Conservative congregations enrolled in day schools than ever before. Hopefully, they will be more knowledgeable than their parents and thus more comfortable in a traditional liturgical environment. And, let's remember that if one is looking for a traditional liturgy in an egalitarian setting, a Conservative synagogue is the address. We are confronted by serious challenges. But, if we are smart, insightful and creative, we will persevere.



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**Samuel Rosenbaum ל"ז Memorial Lecture:**  
**"The State of the Art: The State of Conservative Hazzanut"**

Presented by Hazzan Henry Rosenblum

Panel: Hazzanim Nancy Abramson, Nathan Lam, Jacob Mendelson and  
Rabbi Gordon Tucker

Henry Rosenblum is a true mensch and a fine teacher. He is a man whose heart is bigger than the seas. He has been leading the H.L. Miller Cantorial School for the past 6 years with an unwavering resolve to make hazzanim and hazzanut important in order to retain its role in the conservative Jewish society of America. He has had tremendous success. He is beloved by his colleagues, by the students of the school and especially by his friends. I asked Henry to deliver the Samuel Rosenbaum lecture this morning because everything you heard Stephen Stein so brilliantly tell you leads us to the fact that we all must constantly think of how to retool, reinvent, improve, learn and grow as people, and as hazzanim. Although all of us must sing, it's not good enough just to sing. We've known that for many, many, many years. I would like to introduce you to Henry Rosenblum, Dean of the H.L. Miller Cantorial School.

**Hazzan Henry Rosenblum**

As the first recipient of this most honored award, I'm flattered to have been asked to address you today with words dedicated to the memory of our beloved Sam Rosenbaum. Sam epitomized the hazzan of the 21st century, even though he retired from the pulpit in 1987 and passed away in 1997. His was a career based upon an unwavering commitment to excellence on the part of all his students, great compassion as a caregiver and, above all, limitless energy and creativity as a poet, author, and Executive Vice President of the Cantors Assembly. Sam was a model for all of us, and it is his attributes that will serve as the guideposts for my words today.

You all know the list of responsibilities of the hazzan. *Bet-ha-k'nesset* mentioned in the sources: taking out the Torah, rolling the scrolls, returning the Torah to the ark, announcing the beginning of Shabbat and *Yom Tov* with trumpet blasts, attending to the lamps of the synagogue, reading from the Torah, blowing the *shofar*, leading prayers in the synagogue, acting as secretary of the congregation and leading the chorus of *meshorerim*. And, in addition to those tasks, you must also be knowledgeable in biblical and liturgical literature. Now that's one serious job description!

The hazzan was a truly multifaceted person who was an essential mainstay of the Jewish community. But as times changed, so did the hazzan. Musical creativity, singing and improvisation began to become more and more important. Most of the earlier responsibilities fell by the wayside as the hazzan as pulpit artist became the new glamorous role. When we look at the cantor of the golden age, no one remembers or even cares if Moshe Koussevitzsky could *lein*, if Yossele Rosenblatt made hospital calls, if Zawel Kwartin was an effective *bar/bat mitzvah* teacher or if Leib Glantz blew an exciting *tekiah gedolah*. But, we have their sound and their incredible *chazzonus* indelibly etched into the very fiber of our being and our *neshomes*. *Uv'div-re, Rachem Na, Tiher Rabbi Yishmoel, Shma Yisroel*. You can close your eyes, hear their voices, and be as thrilled today as you were the first time you experienced their artistry. But again, the times changed. There were still cantors who had beautiful voices, but the services were becoming different. Friday night was now a late service, featuring excerpts from *Kabbalat Shabbat*, one or two major pieces for the cantor, choir and possibly organ, and a major sermon. Gone was the service with no particular anticipated ending time. "In" were the numerous instructions to the congregants as to what was coming, when they should stand or sit, and what they were going to read in the *parashah*, even though the *humash* was filled with translations and commentaries. Gone was the hazzan on the *bimah* on Shabbat morning as the source of a concert-like experience. And gone, or perhaps still only going, was the *shul* Jew who came to the *shul* both to *daven* and to be

moved. The need for a multifaceted cantor had returned, and with it, the advent of schools to train people to be prepared to meet that need.

Fifty years ago, the founders of the Cantorial schools at JTS and HUC understood that the American congregation had needs that could be served best by a cantor who was trained seriously in many areas, including, but not limited to, music, hazzanut, cantillation, Judaica, Hebrew language, pastoral care, and Jewish education. The students still worked hard at their hazzanic skills, but understood that there was more to being a cantor than just what they did on the *bimah*. Hazzan Max Wohlberg, *alav hashalom*, used to tell us that hazzanut was still the "meat and potatoes," but also stressed that there needed to be many more choices on the cantorial menu. In fact, the recruitment video that the Cantors Assembly made in 1986 was even entitled "More Than a Singer."

Student cantors were taught that they needed to be a new type of *klei kodesh; shlihey tzibbur* who could touch *amkha* in a variety of ways, using music and prayer as their primary tools while still having many skills that would make them invaluable to their communities. With the European born *shul*-goers departing from active membership rosters, their place was taken by a younger generation who knew less about our traditional *davening*. For a while, the synagogue leadership tried to maintain the older model of a full service with a complete *Birkhot HaShahar, Pesukei D'zimra, Hazarat HaShatz* for *Shaharit* and *Musaf* and a full *Torah leining*. However, the *Hoiche Kedushah*, triennial Torah reading, and ever-increasing communal singing as a replacement for *davening* became the prevailing model. I believe that the blame must be placed squarely upon the shoulders of the rabbis and cantors who were not willing to fight the battle: to teach people how to *daven* as congregants and appreciate what a hazzan could do, to resist the impulse to allow children and adults to regularly lead services in a way that was devoid of *hiddur mitzvah*, to defy the elimination of *Hazarat HaShatz* which only enabled more ill-equipped people to lead services while turning the Cantor primarily into their teacher, to stand firm against the triennial cycle of Torah reading under the misguided notion that it would shorten the service, when, in reality, the

time allotted for introduction to Torah reading, *leining*, *Misheberakh L'Holim*, and introduction to Torah and *Haftarah* is not shorter and quite possibly even longer than it ever was. The fact was allowed to be ignored that most congregants simply sit down after *Kedushah* when there is no *Hazarat HaShatz*, never even hearing the words of *musaf*, or having the opportunity to sing some of the beloved melodies that enable the congregant to leave *shul* uplifted. It is sad that in many *shuls* today there has been such a reduction in any meaningful prayer experience in *Musaf* that there is no hazzanut and *Mekhalkel Hayyim* and *Erev Shel Shoshanim* are practically the only tunes ever heard. But the schools decided to continue to train hazzanim; either with the hope that the tide could be reversed or else with blinders on their eyes. The Birnbaum *mahzor* was, and is, used for teaching High Holiday *nusah* so that a graduate of JTS, for example, could officiate in a synagogue with the most complete *davening*. All the *piyyutim* were learned. *Malkhuyot*, *Zikronot* and *Shofarot* were expected to be mastered. Even *Heye Im Pifiyot* and *Veye'etayu* were on the list of required selections. Wohlberg did concede, however, that most *shuls* no longer said *Heye Im Pifiyot* out loud.

Do you think that Max knew that in the vast majority of today's conservative congregations, most of *Malkhuyot*, *Zikronot* and *Shofarot* would be reduced to an English reading, and that the Hazzan would be left to just chant the *hatimah* after a few short verses? In terms of the Three Festivals, besides mastering the *nusah* for *Shalosh Regalim*, our students still learn things like *B'rakh Dodi*, *Yetziv Pitgam*, and *Apid Nezer*, which are not even found in the *siddur* published by the RA. In addition to Shabbat *nusah*, you'll still find recitations for Shabbat morning, including *Tikanta Shabbat*, *Retzei*, *Modim* and *Sim Shalom* as part of the required curriculum. We hope that they are not just studying these as *torah l'shma*. They still learn the Carlebach service, the BJ service, all the new Debbie Friedman and Craig Taubman tunes, and as many of the new things that come along in order to help them stay current and contemporary. When they spend a year of study in Israel, we make sure to encourage them go daven at *Kol HaNeshamah*, *Shir Hadash*, *Shirah Hadashah*, *Kedem*, *Yakar*, the Great Synagogue, the Italian Synagogue, *Moreshet Avraham*,

HUC, and as many of the *shuls* from *eidot haMizrah* as possible. They must be eclectic, and they must be experts. They must study liturgy, Bible, Talmud, *Midrash*, Jewish philosophy, Jewish education, Jewish history, *nusah*, Jewish music, cantillation, *nusah* theory, music theory, sight singing, and conducting. They must sing in the chorus, learn to play piano, be able to fill out a *ketubah*, learn how to officiate at life cycle events like weddings, funerals, and baby namings, how to visit the sick and comfort the bereaved, how to adjust *tefillin* and negotiate a contract, understand how to relate to a board of directors, and how to make the rabbi understand that you're not there to compete, but rather to work there together as partners. Our cantorial ancestors just needed to know how to stand at the *amud* and "deliver the goods." It is a far more complicated world today.

The hazzan who thinks that he or she will be adored and well-compensated just because he or she has a beautiful voice had better be prepared to be back on placement in the near future. As I told the Chancellor and his rabbinic cabinet two months ago, "I cannot for the life of me understand why a *shul* will hire an assistant rabbi instead of a hazzan. They can have all the work covered and still have a beautiful service and a meaningful, musical experience." As Rabbi Alan Silverstein said in our new recruitment video, "The Cantor and I are twin halves of religious leadership for our congregation." This is what we're trying to teach at the HL Miller Cantorial School. The cantor of the 21st century is someone who must be prepared and willing to do a myriad of things as a leader in the *shul*: teacher, preacher, pastor, role model, *ba'al keriah*, *ba'al tekiah*. But the time has come for us to retain our rightful place as *sh'liah tzibbur*. We must study voice, study *nusah hatefillah* and bring the highest level of hazzanut back into our services. Congregational tunes are important, but not when there is no hazzanut left in the service.

Teaching children to *daven* is important, but not when it means that the Hazzan never stands in front of the ark leading the congregation in prayer. Training adults to improve their *davening* skills is important, but not when it means that your entire contribution to the prayer experience in your shul

is as the educator of others. If you serve a Reform congregation, I urge you to find ways of bringing hazzanut into your services and to preserving it in serious ways. They may not understand every word you say. They don't in Conservative *shuls* either. But they will respond to integrity, authenticity, and to beautiful singing.

It is critical for us to look deep within and to commit ourselves to a more serious and observant lifestyle. Our cantorial students are expected to make a commitment to the observance of Shabbat, *kashrut* and daily prayer. Do you? If the hazzan of the 21st century is to be seen as the partner of the rabbi of the 21st century, there must be *hukkah ahat*. You will never be peers if there is a feeling that you don't take your observance seriously. Hazzanim have come full circle and are once again the multifaceted people who are an essential mainstay of the Jewish community. The expertise has been acquired through formal education like never before. I believe that we stand at a crossroads in our professional existence. We can move far beyond *hazzan bet-ha-k'neset* and bring a vibrancy to the Jewish community that can reap untold rewards both for them and for us, but the responsibility is ours. We can do all that is expected of us and more, or we can chose to live in a past, in a Golden Age that has changed forever. *Hayom katzar v'hamelakha m'rubbah*. The time is getting short, and the work is great. We must do it now. We may not get another chance.

**(Narrator)**

I'm going to take very little time introducing our panel, most of whom you know intimately. Let's start with someone you know:

Hazzan Jacob Mendelson, our president.

Hazzan Nancy Abramson who has been with us for many years. I've watched her grow into the role. She's a very serious hazzan. She's the hazzan at the Park Avenue Synagogue alongside Hazzan David Lefkowitz.



And our very special guest Gordon Tucker. Rabbi Tucker is Rabbi of Temple Israel Center, White Plains, New York, and Hazzan Mendelson's Rabbi. A few things you may not know about rabbi Tucker is he's been on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary since 1976. He was the Dean of the Rabbinical School from 1984-1992. He's the chairman of the Masorti Foundation. He's a PhD Cum Laude from Harvard University and also from Princeton University in logic and various other things.

This is our distinguished panel, and I'd like to turn it over to them.

### Hazzan Jacob Mendelson

What I would like to do is just underline a few things that Henry said. The biggest thing that goes through my mind also ties into what Steve said before about the Conservative movement. We need to believe in the Conservative movement and that it's going to stay because we are the movement of Hillel. We are the movement of reason. We have the tradition and we live it today. What we bring to the table as hazzanim is the soul of what happens in the prayer service of many congregations. Obviously, we know the biggest impediment towards participation of the congregation is their lack of knowledge of Hebrew and of the ability to read Hebrew. Maybe we need a Manhattan Project in this country to educate our congregations in even the most basic Hebrew skills.

(Singing) But a Manhattan Project might not happen. So, a couple of things that we all possibly should be doing is to build on the congregants who can respond, that can *daven*, and who know when to come in. Take them aside during the week and teach them not to just sing the congregational melodies but maybe sing them in harmony or sing them accurately. Teach them, in the most rudimentary way, to hum a response. We hold in our hands such power; you have no idea how much power you have to lift up your service. We as hazzanim can lift up the entire Conservative movement with our work, but it must be done with the tools. Anybody can sing a folk song. You don't have to go to school to learn how to do that. But it takes effort and work to really be a master of the *nusah* so that you can weave in and out of it in a comfortable way where

the congregation knows they are hearing something they only hear in the synagogue. We're not the concert hall. When a hazzan sings properly, it's not a concert, it's something else. So we must be masters of what we do so that we can introduce the new while we keep that pedal tone, constant pedal tone, of where we come from, going as a hummm, as you will, throughout the entire service. Go out there and do it.

### Nancy Abramson

I'd like to start with a framework for my remarks, which comes from two different poles of our tradition. The first is a phrase that's written above the *Aron* in many of our congregations: *Da lifnei mi ata omed*. Know before whom you stand that there needs to be a cognizance of our place as *shalichei tzibur* in relation to both the congregation and God.

The second phrase comes from a song by Doug Cotler, "Standing on the Shoulders", in which the chorus says "I'm standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me." So what I am about to say comes from the understanding that when I am working as a hazzan (and hopefully in the other areas of my life as well), I am merely a vessel from the congregation to God. At the same time, I need to be always cognizant of tradition, of those who built up what we have so that I can be doing what I am doing now. I know that when I'm learning a new piece of music for our liturgy that sometimes I actually do look behind my shoulders to see who is standing there. So what I am about to say can be distilled into three words: community, education, and spirituality.

Community. I think that the way to make sure that what we're doing continues on after us, is to build a sense of community. We can get away with a lot more on the *bimah* if the people sitting there looking at their watches know that we sang with their children in the nursery school this week, that we visited their aunt in the hospital, that we called to find out if their son got into the college of his choice, and if we are there for them at the times when they need us. I know there have been many discussions within this group of whether we are in a job or in a calling. There is no

doubt in my mind that, while I would like to compartmentalize what I do for a living, it always spills over. Certainly my husband and children know that when a call comes and there's a funeral or there's someone who wants me to do a baby-naming that the answer is yes, barring some unforeseen circumstance.

So our job is to build bonds, to build a community. Henry spoke eloquently about how we do that on the *bimah*, and Jackie echoed his words. I think there are many ways off the *bimah* that are equally as important to ensure our future. We need to relate to our congregants. They must see that we are out there in the gym fighting the same battle of aging that they are fighting. They must see that we can go to the movies and talk about contemporary issues. They must know that we read the newspaper and are concerned about the same issues that concern them. That's community.

Education. It is paramount that we share what we know. In order for us to be able to *daven*, to interpret text, which is obviously where we are all coming from, they have to get it. I am very fortunate to be in a large synagogue with rabbinic colleagues who do get it. David Lefkowitz, my senior colleague, and I spend time at weekly staff meetings talking with the rabbis. We discuss what we're thinking about doing each Shabbat: How can we do this as a team? How can we educate people with a two-sentence introduction that what is coming has meaning and it is not just the cantors showing off. Again, we do this weekly to ensure that the rabbis are on our side in terms of educating the congregation. It is our job to make sure that our congregants are participating in choirs in our congregations so that they know what our sacred texts mean, and that they get to know us with those texts.

The other side of education is that we need to keep learning and studying and growing. Frequently at these conventions, we hear that each year JTS will offer to us a course at no charge that can be taken at the Seminary or online. Several of our colleagues have attended the spirituality institutes in order to continue to learn both about themselves

and their connection to the tradition. In my mind, it is imperative that each of us continues to take voice lessons on a weekly basis. The bottom line is that we were hired because we could sing. If we can't continue to do that then we're in big trouble.

Spirituality. We need to bring the prayer-experience alive to our congregants. While I certainly agree with what Henry and Jackie said about *nusah* and about hazzanut, I think we have to recognize that spiritually that's not where 98% of our congregants are. We need to engage them on a level where they can be reached, and help move them up incrementally on the spiritual ladder. Our congregants need to feel the continuum of our spiritual heritage, with the past behind us and the future in front of us. Thank you!

### **Rabbi Gordon Tucker**

I grew up having to listen to my father play 78s of Kwartin's *V'al Y'dei* and Pinchik's *Rozo D'Shabbos* over and over again. I didn't know until I was much older that hazzanut didn't have to have scratches in it. I think I thought that sounding scratchy was part of the art form. But it wasn't tedious for me. I really learned to love it at a very early age. I knew that hazzanut was somehow going to be a part of my future. As a little kid, I naively thought that I was going to be a hazzan. What I didn't realize was that hazzanut would be an important part of my future in a different way, and that was by being partnered with one of the greatest hazzanim that we have. Sometimes you misread the symbols, but that's what was being foreshadowed when I was listening to those records. In many ways, what I have to say is really the result of the ten years that I have worked with Jackie Mendelson and the things that we've learned and shared between us.

You've heard a number of people try to offer ideas as to what makes the hazzan special. It is not just a voice, or being an educator, or a religious leader. For me, it is because music is in and of itself an important kind of

ritual. Therefore, the accomplished hazzan is a master of ritual. It's important to understand how ritual works and what makes it work. A couple of weeks ago, we had the great privilege of having Rabbi Jacob Milgrom at our *shul* speaking about this. This is the man who has now written the greatest commentary ever written on the book of Leviticus. He spoke about ritual and he said two things that were really important. First is that it's the essence of ritual to be repeated and to be repeatable. I believe that that already tells you something about the difference between a great cantorial concert piece and a great cantorial synagogue piece. They may both be for solo voice, but the concert piece is not necessarily something that is going to burn itself into the souls of the listener that will bring them back over and over again. That's what ritual is about. It needs to be repeated and it needs to be repeatable by the person putting it out and by the person experiencing it.

The second thing is that it needs to be symbolic of something beyond itself. That's a tricky thing. That's true of words and actions that are repeated ritually – performative *mitzvot*. I think it's absolutely true of the kind of music that creates meaningful ritual. It may be beautiful in its own right, and it is almost always composed and performed by professionals, but there has to be something in it that is symbolic of what the moment is about, particularly if it is a moment of reaching out to God and a moment of *tefillah*. It needs to be evocative in that way. I think Nate talked a little bit about the issues of the junction between music and text, and I think they are crucial here.

The one thing that Jacob Milgrom stressed is that if any ritual becomes an end in itself, it degenerates into idiosyncrasy and compulsiveness. In the past, people have looked at the rituals in *Vayyikra* that way and in so doing completely misunderstood the book. That's true of some of the words we say, of the Torah we teach and actions that we exhort. It's important to understand that it's true of the ritual of music as well. We must never lose sight of the symbolic and evocative role that this has to play as an important ritual in the synagogue and in the lives of Jews that will bring them to the places that we are sworn to bring them to.

So that brings us to some of the interesting problems that I surely don't know how to solve all by myself. Henry said something about people needing to know the meaning of prayers in Hebrew, and I think that is true; what the musical ritual evokes and what it is symbolic of will often be lost if the words that it is painting are not understood. But most important is that people need to know how to pray. I have learned in ten years now in the congregational rabbinate that the most important aspect of people knowing how to pray is knowing whom to look to for guidance. They have to be able to see someone that they can follow. That simple Hebrew word "ahara" -- "after me", "follow me," is one of the most important educative words in any language. You all know the aphorism that the only things that really enter the heart are those things that come from the heart. This underscores for both rabbi and cantor the importance to those who look to us of constantly having a sense that we are talking about and talking to God in doing what we do.

For example, the importance of a rabbi or hazzan being at *minyan* on a daily basis is the importance of people knowing that *tefillah* is an important part of our lives. That when we are in the synagogue in an officiating posture, we are doing something that's for *ourselves* as well. That we too are seeking. I think that one of the big problems in any profession that seeks to do this, and this applies equally to the rabbinate and the cantorate, is that once you begin to think of yourself and begin to project yourself to others as in some sense finished, "having arrived" or having completed a professional goal, a state of spiritual inertia sets in, and not just for yourself. The aura projects itself out to others as well. A most profound *midrashic* statement that is one of my favorites is one that's quite powerful. It is from the *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* on the *haftarah* "Roni Akarah." The phrase that the *midrash* picks up on is "*ki rabim b'nei shomemah mi-b'nei ve-ulah*" ("the children of the deserted one are greater in number than the children of the married one"). It, of course, is referring metaphorically to Zion, and the *midrash* understands that, and it says the following: "*harbei tzaddikim he-emidah li be-hurbanah, yoter mi-tzaddikim she-he-emidah li be-vinyanah*" ("she [Zion] produced more righteous

people for Me during her time of desolation than she did while she was fully built up"). The comment means that the history of religion is such that when Zion was destroyed and was inaccessible to us, when we had to reach out to it and we weren't there yet, when we had a sense of yearning and stretching and having to get somewhere, that was a greater engine for producing righteousness than is the sense of being there or of having arrived. And so it is here as well: For rabbis and cantors to be able sincerely, and not in a staged way, to project to their community a sense that they are *unfinished*, when people sense in what you do, and in who you are, an unfinished quality, it makes a very, very powerful statement. Here's another source, not from the *midrash*, but equally powerful. It is that great scene in Hamlet where Hamlet finally has the opportunity to kill his murderous uncle, but he finds his uncle on his knees in prayer and thinks [here I paraphrase]: 'Oh, I can't do the deed now because he's in a state of grace and he'll go to heaven if I kill him now'. But then Shakespeare gives us the opportunity actually to listen in on the words Hamlet's uncle is *actually* murmuring. He says, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go." That is, words were being performed, but the essence of religion was somehow missing there. If only Hamlet had known that, of course, he probably could have somehow plunged the knife into the man who murdered his father and had it all done. But of course he didn't know that, and that's really the essence of the scene: that we can often fool ourselves and fool others into thinking that there is something religious going on, but it's not really going on unless we are there ourselves, and can find in ourselves that sense of what is missing and what we still have to achieve.

Let me throw out a couple of final thoughts that I don't have answers to but that grow out of some recent experiences we've had in our congregation. We were among many congregations in Westchester County that were involved in the Synagogue 2000 program. One of the things that became obvious to me over and over again was that there is a contradiction that I don't know how to bridge between two of the goals that this program set out as challenges for its participating synagogues. One

of the goals was openness, inclusiveness, wanting to bring more people in, make them feel at home and not make them feel that they were just a step beyond the threshold, unable to get in. The other was deepening the sense of spirituality in the congregation. Both of these are important and laudable goals. But I don't know how to do them both at the same time. The greatest *tefillah* we have in the entire week is *Kabbalat Shabbat*. It is not a late Friday night service. It is at sunset. It goes for about 55 minutes, and basically without interruption. There is a 5 minute *kavvanah* between *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *Ma'ariv* that sets a spiritual mood, and the rest is music and *davening*. Shabbat morning, on the other hand, is the inclusive time; it's the town meeting, because you have to acknowledge the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and you have to acknowledge the *ufraf*, and you have to acknowledge the kids who are going off to Israel, the kids who just graduated from college, and of course the births, etc. All of this is very, very important for making people feel included and welcome, but it completely destroys the spiritual mood, which depends on continuity.

So I don't quite know how to do it. It would be nice to think this out together a little bit. Someone mentioned some of the *minyanim* in Jerusalem that our people love to go to, a little bit of a thorn in my side. I actually went to *Shirah Hadashah* for the first time in my life in February. I was virtually under orders from my synagogue president to go. I felt very guilty not being at one of the Masorti congregations, which I make it a point to support every time I am there, but what made me feel worse was that 2/3 of the Rabbinical Assembly was at *Shirah Hadashah* as well. This is not to say that it is not a nice and uplifting *davening*. But part of it is that there is a homogeneity that we do not enjoy in our congregations. That means that everyone is kind of on the same page, so that things can more or less flow without having to think about who is being left behind and "how do I reach out for them?". I'm not sure we ought to be striving for such homogeneity in our communities. The challenge is much greater for us, in that we have taken on this sacred task of trying to bring more people in. How to make that dovetail with the aura of spirituality that ultimately is the engine driving the wish to be in a synagogue, and the



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wish to be following a rabbi and a cantor, is something that I want to leave for discussion. Thank you very much!

### Presentation of the Samuel Rosenbaum Award.

#### Hazzan Saul Hammerman

It has been my privilege and honor to know the recipient, Hazzan Abraham Shapiro, for well over 50 years. First of all, Samuel Rosenbaum lives within us all the time and at every convention. I can recall when I first entered the cantorate, David Putterman was the Executive Vice President. We were indeed fortunate to have him because he was a pioneer. Then Samuel Rosenbaum came along and he was the epitome of everything that we would desire of an Executive Vice President.

Abraham Shapiro and Samuel Rosenbaum were a team. I had the good fortune of being in Rochester for two or three days as Samuel's guest. We were making a video. A hazzan is not just a singer; a hazzan is a singer with a great heart. A short excerpt of this video will now be shown here where we can see what kind of personality Sam was. (Video plays.) In order to follow in Samuel's footsteps, you have to be a most unusual person.

Since my father worked as a tailor, I had to work while going to school. My first position part time was in Passaic, NJ. I had the good fortune of meeting the Shapiro family because we had arranged that I would be eating there on Shabbat. It's been over 50 years and I know that the Cantors Assembly is as strong as it is today mainly because we have the loyalty, the wisdom and the kindness of Abraham Shapiro, who is well deserving of this great honor. So to keep my remarks brief, I'd like to call on Hazzan Abraham Shapiro.

Abraham Shapiro

We know our families go back to a little town. Our parents knew each other in Europe. A gifted poet in the golden age in Spain defined human speech as the interpreter between the heart of the speaker and the listeners. No words that come from my lips can adequately describe how grateful I feel for the tribute of affection and honor that you have shown me today by presenting to me the Samuel Rosenbaum Memorial Award. Once in a generation, the Almighty gives us a gift, and puts on this earth the purpose of what it is to lead and to make a difference. Such a purpose was Samuel Rosenbaum. In my heart, he will never be replaced. We shared so many memorable experiences and conferences for which I am very grateful. He was a most loving and devoted best friend. His intellect, his integrity and sensitivity made him a very special person. But it was his genius and humility that made people from all walks of life respond to him with friendship and respect. His love of learning was innate and all-encompassing, as was his profound appreciation of the arts, music, theater, hazzanut, and, above all, the Cantors Assembly. How fortunate for me that I was able to share these interests with him. His humanity, his kindness and caring inspired all of us. I miss him, but he'll never be gone.

I really have no right to expect anything from you people. If he performed in that faithful fashion the task he has assumed, he has no right to expect any special thanks or reward. For that was the task for which he entered the service of the Lord. That is why I doubly appreciate the kind words that were spoken and this award. I am happy for this occasion, not only for the chance to hear these pleasant words, but because it offers me an opportunity – which should be given to every man in public life – to thank God for the blessings that I have enjoyed.

I thank God for, and I am privileged to have and share with me, the companion of my youth, my wife, Millie. A man and wife may be characterized as a soloist and an accompanist. The audience generally



pays all its attention to the soloist and hardly gives any thought to the person behind that piano. However, if the accompanist should play one false note the soloist is then lost. I am happy for this opportunity to thank God for my accompanist in life. As you say, if I've preformed well, it is because of Millie. I'm thankful for all the children that are mine that I've always shown such appreciation for. I am also thankful to you, the families of the Cantors Assembly, whom it has been my privilege to serve for these many years.

The implements of the leader are no greater than those of those with whom he is willing to lead and what they are willing to grant him. If I have achieved anything in this organization, it is because I had help from former presidents, many who rose before, leaders like Sam Rosenbaum and our present Executive Vice President, Stephen Stein. These people have urged, helped and inspired this achievement. Far be it from me to proclaim that I have achieved lofty goals of leadership for myself. No one recognizes my failure and disrespect more than I, but this, in all humility, I might rightly claim for myself. While I have not reached certain heights of leadership, I did and do set for myself extreme heights of leadership as my ideal. These were the goals for which I have striven in the past and toward which, with God's help, I hope to strive in the years to come. My plea to you today is to help me and to help the Cantors Assembly to achieve goals that we all want. Help me, so that I may better help you, to bring these heavenly ideals and goals into your hearts and your souls. Thank you, and God bless you!

**"Introducing Five Piyutim from the New Conservative *Mahzor*:  
Premiere Compositions by Hazzanim Charles Davidson, Israel  
Goldstein, Jerome Kopmar and Benjamin Maissner"**

Presented by Rabbi Edward Feld (Jewish Theological Seminary) and  
Hazzan Joseph Levine

Participating Hazzanim: Israel Goldstein, Jerome Kopmar, Benjamin Maissner, Raphael  
Frieder, Faith Steinsnyder – The New Jersey Cantors Assembly Ensemble, Hazzan  
Sheldon Levin, Conductor Accompanist: Joyce Rosenzweig

**Hazzan Joseph Levine**

In 1954, Max Arzt, then Provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, rose to make an announcement at the annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly. "All rabbis," he said, "who are happy with their Board of Directors--will meet in half-a-century on the second floor in the telephone booth." Half-a-century later, I am tempted to paraphrase: All hazzanim who are *unhappy* with their current High Holiday *Mahzor*--have come to the right room, because we are about to find out what is being done about it.

In the Convention binder, you will find the texts of five *piyyutim* that are unfamiliar to you. If you look through them, you will see nothing that you remember. That is because four of them are from different rites--the Italian or the Sephardic, for example--and the fifth of the *piyyutim* was just written. In the New Conservative *Mahzor*, of course, all five of them will appear more clearly than they do on these photocopies of uncorrected proofs that you have before you. They do indicate where we would like you to join in, as the congregational refrains are underlined. I am sure you will have a lot of questions. If you would be good enough to write them down on the index cards you have been given and hand them to an usher, we will try to address your concerns after the presentation portion of the program.

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In a recent article on the creativity of Genesis, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman asks the question, "Why don't we run out of jokes? How is it that when we turn on late-night TV, the comic host never says, 'Folks, I couldn't think of anything funny tonight'?" In other words, why is the universe full of creativity, not just on a good day but always? Hoffman finds his answer in two commentators who lived a thousand years apart, Rabbi Yehudah and Nahmanides. Both believed that in the beginning, God produced an initial state, the raw materials from which all life emerges. The shape that material would take had to be invented. In other words, as time went on it had to be invented by us as God's partners in creation.

Our guide for today's segment of that ongoing creative process, Rabbi Edward Feld, is one of God's partners. He is a published poet, amateur cellist, former Hillel director at the Universities of Illinois and Princeton, and Dean of Religious Life at Smith and Amherst Colleges. He also served as the rabbi at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York City. Currently rabbi-in-residence at the Seminary, he has authored a book on spiritual renewal and written articles on *halachah*, modern Jewish thought, and the needs of Conservative Judaism's multiple constituencies on how to go about meeting those needs.

He brings all of that awareness and life experience to his chairmanship of the Rabbinical Assembly's *mahzor* committee, on which I am also privileged to serve. The committee recognizes that our prayer book is the only sacred Jewish text still subject to change. "Were this not so," observes Rabbi Feld in a preface to the new *mahzor*, "we would not enjoy such a variety of traditions." For the five *Kol Nidrei Night piyyutim* we are about to study and listen to, the *Mahzor* committee has commissioned new music, composed by our colleagues Benjamin Maissner, Jerome Kopmar, Israel Goldstein and Charles Davidson. For the fifth *piyyut*, we have adapted a setting by the first hazzan to sign up as a charter member of the Cantors Assembly back in 1947, Abba Yosef Weisgal. To present the new *piyyutim*, here is the most stimulating teacher of liturgy that I

have ever encountered in all the years since I graduated from the Cantors Institute, Rabbi Edward Feld.

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### Rabbi Edward Feld

Thank you so much, Joe. I should say that, from the very beginning, we absolutely wanted a hazzan to be on this committee. We could not imagine doing a High Holiday *mahzor* without the input of a hazzan, and it has been wonderful to have Joe on this committee. He participates at every meeting, his input has been extraordinary, and he has influenced everybody on the committee. As soon as he joined, we realized what a treasure he was. We asked him to lead us in a *tefillah*, as it is our custom to have a *tefillah* at the beginning of each meeting. He said, "I'll lead you in something from the High Holiday prayer book since this is a High Holiday *mahzor*." He said, "v'salahta la'avoneinu ki rav hu." It was then that I realized that for Jews, pointing a finger is a musical notation. It has been lovely to see this kind of partnership between rabbi and hazzan on the committee and I hope that you will feel this cooperation when you see the new *mahzor*.

The projected timeline is a published *mahzor* in 2008. That sounds far away, but it seems close to me, as we began in 1998 and this is a ten-year project. One of the innovations of this *mahzor* is a running commentary. We felt that the congregation needs something to help it along in the *davening*. On the High Holidays, ninety percent of the people who come to the synagogue are strangers to what is happening and therefore, the *mahzor* has to give them the signals of what-are-we-doing-now and why-is-this-here. We have *kavvanot* (meditations) on the side so that people can focus their attention on the meaning of these *tefillot*.

We also began rethinking the liturgy in terms of the *piyyutim*, the post-talmudic elements that came into the *mahzor*. The *piyyutim* are not in any

order. There are different *piyyutim* in the Italian rite, there are different *piyyutim* in the Sephardic rite, and there are different *piyyutim* in the Ashkenazic rite. The custom in Eastern Europe was that on the High Holy Days, one would receive a printed piece of paper that would list which *piyyutim* would be said that year. Some *kehilot* had a cycle of seven years in which they said these *piyyutim*.

When we looked at what we wanted to do with this section of the *Selihah* and *Viddui*, I went to the Seminary library and looked through a bunch of manuscripts and early printed *mahzorim* to see what they looked like and what they included. The Seminary owns the first complete Ashkenazic *mahzor* still in existence from 1290. I sat in the Rare Book Room and looked through this *mahzor*, which had been handed down. It had a beautifully handwritten text and in the margins there were new *piyyutim* that had been written in by people. In certain places, there was no longer room because people had written all over all of the margins. *Piyyutim* were pasted on top of *piyyutim*. Even in 1290, this *mahzor* contained the basic rubric of what we do now. It contained a mixture of a set tradition and also of creativity. That is the struggle that we have gone through in creating this *mahzor*. We are trying to ensure that there is continuity with the first Conservative *mahzor*, but we are also trying to be open to what it did. We do not want to say that because people came to America, printed the first prayer book here, and everybody has followed it afterwards, that is the way we ought to be doing it.

We wanted to incorporate. When I go to Israel, one of the great things is seeing all of these different *edot* with all their different traditions. What should be the American *minhag*? Should not the American *minhag* incorporate this variety of traditions? What we have done, which has already been a tradition of the Conservative prayer book, is to take some of that Sephardic *piyyut*—which is so different from Ashkenazic *piyyut*—and put that back in the prayer book. We took this lovely Ibn Gabirol poem.

We looked at the Italian rite and found material there that was inspiring, and you will see a piece that we will do from the Italian rite.

We also wanted to deal with the gender issue. We wanted to put women back into the *mahzor*, not to fiddle with *tefillot* in terms of rewriting their *nusah* so much, but to do additional things that would be inclusive. You will find here this *tefillah* for *Hannah*, which we put into the *Viddui*. Right after the *Al Het* you have a series of verses saying, "God answered Daniel, God answered Micah," and so on. We put in *Hannah* to introduce that segment. You will see here a piece that we wrote which takes biblical *pesukim* and recombines them in that same medieval form which the other pieces have, and put it into this prayer book.

We also wanted to have some sense of order in the prayer book. In the *Selihah* section there is no tradition of what is the order of *Selihot* and why you say one after the other. Every rite is different and you can find enormous variation, not only between Ashkenazic and Sephardic, but also between German rite and Polish rite. We decided to divide the *Selihot* section into three subdivisions. What constitutes each subdivision is a *piyyut* or series of *piyyutim*, or series of biblical *pesukim* followed by the *Shlosh Esreh Midot*. We did three subdivisions each for *Kol Nidrei* and *Ne'ilah* so that they would balance each other, and took an Eastern European *minhag* of not saying *Selihot* for *Shaharit*, *Musaf*, and *Minhah* and just framed the day with those *Selihot* subdivisions. You do recite *Viddui* in all of those services, but the *Selihot* is that with which you begin and end.

That is what we are doing as the framing for this *mahzor*, and we put in a first section which is focused toward God, a second section which is focused toward the human as finite, as making mistakes, and as needing constantly to examine his or her ways, and a third section which is focused toward God and humans coming close together and meeting each other. There is movement in the *Selihot*, in the sense of a rational progress of what is being said. We did not presume that everyone is

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going to say everything, but we did presume that somebody looking at this *mahzor* could travel through it and have an experience of introspection and religion.

We also knew that not everything that we did would be used unless we had music to accompany it. We could figure out the best work to put in, but without music, it would just be lost. For everything new that we have put into the *mahzor*, we have commissioned a new piece of music, and the *mahzor* will be distributed along with a CD. This fall, if everything goes well, we will experiment with the *Kol Nidrei* service at three different synagogues in the east, west, and south and we will see if our work touches congregations. What you are going to hear today is the music that we are going to send along in these experiments. We are going to have a booklet of the new *Kol Nidrei* service and we hope that you will use this material.

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The first piece that you will hear is something that we came across that we thought was absolutely delightful. We found it in reading the *Mishnah* in *Yoma*. It says that one of the things that the *kohen gadol* studied the night before he went into the *kodesh hakodashim* was the Book of Job. I was overwhelmed when I came across that *Mishnah*. The notion that the way you prepare for that holiest moment is by *questioning* God was extraordinary and striking. *Yom Kippur* is not only a moment when you question yourself, but also a moment when you question God and your relationship with God.

Then we discovered that it is a Sephardic *minhag* for everyone to read the Book of Job before *Ma'ariv* on the eve of *Yom Kippur*. We decided that we needed to put a piece from the Book of Job into the *Kol Nidrei* service because that was the recovery of a very important tradition. This first piece is taken from chapter twenty-eight of the Book of Job,

*VeHahochmah Mei'Ayin Timatsei* ("where can you find wisdom?"). The Book of Job says that you can dig deep into the bowels of the earth, you

can go everywhere and try the geographical wisdom, but you will not find wisdom in the geography. You will ultimately find wisdom in the secrets of the heart and in the awe that one has of Heaven. The setting--arranged by Yefim Adler--was composed by Hazzan Benjamin Maissner who will sing the cantor solo, accompanied by pianist Joyce Rosenzweig and the New Jersey Regional Ensemble.

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The next piece is taken from the Italian rite, and we just fell in love with this *piyyut* because it really expresses the sense of distance and closeness that one feels on *Yom Kippur*. The distance is no longer having the *Avodah* service of the High Priest, but we are able to overcome that distance through our own fasting and prayer. The line that repeats is, *mahar ya'aseh hashem et hadavar hazeh* ("tomorrow, God will indeed forgive us"), because we are, in fact, standing here on this day in place of the *kohen gadol*. The second verse says:

My soul yearns for You, and though I am afraid of Your judgment and our ritual is imperfect and we can no longer follow the prescribed form, yet we depend on You. Turn to us as if we were High Priests standing before Your curtain.

It is really quite extraordinary. The music was written by Jerome Kopmar, Cantor Emeritus at Congregation Beth Abraham in Dayton, Ohio, who will sing his own solo part.

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You may have noticed that in the last verse it says, "I am appealing to you, forgive my sins as I call to you *b'veit mikdash hakodesh*. It means that where we stand today, even though it is not *beit hamikdash*, is a holy

place. We are standing here *like* the High Priest once stood. Because we have such a difficult time with the obtuse Hebrew of Ashkenazic *piyyut*, one of the things we do not notice is the theological radicalism of *piyyutim*.

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The reason why people wrote *piyyutim* in the Middle Ages is because they felt the necessity of putting their own theology into the prayer book. The theology here is that this synagogue is *our beit hamikdash*.

In the work of the Spanish poet Ibn Gabirol, there is a move that is even more radical. He starts with the sense of distance, asking, "How can I talk to you, God? You are out there, You are infinite and I am just this little human being." And then he ends and says, "but I have a *neshamah*, a soul, which is a piece of You--and so--You are in me, and the reason why I can reach you is because it is really God talking to God. There is a piece of You that has motivated this prayer, and that is Your soul in me." That is what he does in this next *piyyut*, this wonderful poem, *Terem Heyoti Hasdecha Va'ani*.

Before I existed, Your kindness did not *ba eilai*, "come to me," but--*va'ani*--Your kindness came *into* me. You are in me. You are what I am. The *nishmat elohim hai*, the piece of me that is the living, animating human being, is You who are in me. I am going to admit my sin, but since You are in me, You are the one who committed it. We, as human beings, are a reflection of God and if we have all kinds of desires and motives and pieces of ourselves that are pulling in all kinds of directions, then that is really God's gift in us. And so forgive us, God, because I was just trying to work out the gifts that You gave me. It is both an admission of guilt and an appeal for forgiveness. *Terem Heyoti*-- written by Hazzan Israel Goldstein--will be sung by Beny Maissner.

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The greatest of the medieval Spanish poets was Yehudah Halevi and, to my mind, one of his greatest poems is the next piece:

Where can I find You? You are so high and distant. But where can I not find You, because You fill the whole earth with Your glory. I sought to come closer to You and I called You with all my heart, and as I went out to You, You came toward me...

It is a piece that we put in just before *Sh'ma Koleinu*, so that this thought of our going out to God and God coming to us is in the minds of the *kahal* as we open the ark and say *Sh'ma Koleinu*. The music, composed by Hazzan Charles Davidson, will be sung by Hazzan Rafi Frieder.

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This last piece is put in just after the *Viddui, Al Heit*, and is about God's answering prayer. It is amazing to me that even though the Talmud takes *Hannah* as the model of prayer, no one thought of writing a *piyyut* about her until now. I think of it as our putting her deserved place back into the *mahzor*. The music was adapted by our own Joe Levine from a chant for *Ezra HaSofer*—whose place this new *piyyut* takes—composed by his mentor, the late Abba Yosef Weisgal. The soloist is Hazzan Faith Steinsnyder.

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### Hazzan Joseph Levine

I'd like to acknowledge the two of our composers who are present—my talented friends, Beny Maissner and Jerry Kopmar; our outstanding guest soloists, Rafi Frieder and Faith Steinsnyder; and our sensitive accompanist, Joyce Rosenzweig. I especially express our gratitude for the dedication and musicianship of the New Jersey Regional Ensemble—directed by our past president, the unflappable Sheldon Levin.

As I thank the ushers for collecting—and my wife Doris for collating—your written questions, won't you join me in applauding the scholar whose amazing perspective on the language of prayer has brought us to this collaborative session between the Cantors Assembly and the Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Ed Feld.

Rabbi Feld, I am sure the energy level we all experienced listening to—and joining in singing—these *piyyutim* was prompted in no small part by the insightful way you introduced each one. When the booklet for *Kol*

*Nidre* Night is made available—along with the musical scores and the recording of this session—hazzanim and rabbanim will be able to prepare choirs and to involve congregations in singing—at the very least—the beautiful refrains that were expressly composed for that purpose.

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It is a long-standing tradition for Jews of all persuasions to join in singing poetic refrains on the High Holy Days. And it is just as traditional—at Jewish weddings—after the guests have gone and the orchestra and caterer have been paid, for the bride and groom and their families to participate in the seasonal ritual for that occasion: opening the envelopes and seeing in what financial shape the young couple will start their married life.

At one particular affair, the large bag in which all the check-envelopes had been stashed, turned up empty! Someone had stolen the wedding money. The bride's mother grew livid. "I knew this match was a mistake!" The newlyweds slouched off to their hotel, despondent. Their parents cursed the ill-fated day, and one grandmother developed a full-blown cataract in her left eye—on the spot!

After a day of frantic telephoning to get the missing checks cancelled, and of intensive police searching and of bitter tears shed by the bride, both families began the process of accepting the monetary loss and of consoling themselves with the strange-looking serving trays and grotesque knick-knacks that had been left untouched in their multiply-wrapped cartons within cartons.

When two weeks had passed, the families gathered in the newlyweds' walk-up apartment to observe the first of many bonding rituals that would take place: sitting down to watch the wedding video. Everyone was in it: parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles—including the quiet one, Morris—whom many considered a bit of an "operator."

So it came as no surprise to those "in the know" when Uncle Morris' ample posterior appeared on the screen, squatting in front of a shopping bag as he emptied 100-or-so checks into an attaché case, snapped it shut, waddled out of the hall and into a waiting automobile. Hysteria broke out. Morris' wife—Aunt Minnie—jumped from a second-story window and broke both legs; the family was fragmented forever!

When a congregational rabbi first told that story, he added—with great pathos—that this is exactly the way our lives will one day be screened in the World to Come. There will be no conversation, only visual evidence that speaks for itself. In that scenario, legal objections will not prevail. But arguments—couched in a *musical* language that outdoes even the finest cinematography because it leaves room for the imagination—might just catch the attention of the Court on High. That is why, in our penitential prayers on Yom Kippur, we resort to *piyyut*—or as it was originally called in Arabic, *hizana*, in Aramaic, *hazanya*, or in Hebrew, *hazzanut*—a language of associative imagery, articulated through words that are sung in a particular way at a specific time.

Speaking of which, the time has come to hear your questions...

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**Rabbi Edward Feld (with answers to submitted questions)**

First of all, I hope that you have noticed the commentary running down the side of the handout; it is in fact, the commentary that appears in the new *mahzor*. This is the style of the commentary, and here you have a sample of what people will experience. We have put back many of the old Ashkenazic *piyyutim* and I wanted to bring to your attention the new things that we have done, that you are not familiar with.

We have looked at every service and looked at the appropriate *piyyutim* to put in. There is a difference between Ashkenazic *piyyut* and Sephardic

*piyyut*. Ashkenazic *piyyut* is based on much more florid language. We chose personal *piyyutim* because in this generation of congregants, unless people are touched on a personal level, they are just going to take a walk. Services and liturgy have to express the personal "I" in some way. It does not have to be exclusively so, but there were choices made at early points of the tradition of what got in and what did not get in.

The *tehillim* that have been in the *mahzor* are by and large *tehillim* of praise. The *tehillim* that are *tehillim* of personal struggle and trying to work out a sense of communication with—and location of—God, are the *tehillim* which did *not* get into the *mahzor*. We felt a need to take at least some of those lines and put them back in, because I think that those are the lines from the tradition that will speak to *this* generation. Here we found this treasure of material that we felt could inspire people in a new way.

It was also our sense that what we have not arrived at yet, and what may take us a couple of hundred years to arrive at, is: what should constitute *minhag* America? Every country had its own rite. When I went through these *mahzorim* in the Seminary library, I found *mahzorim* from communities that are no longer in existence. I went through *mahzorim* from communities in France that were by and large eventually wiped out because Jews were expelled from France. I found French rites that few know of. Every one of these communities had a *minhag* of what to say on the High Holy Days that reflected their culture in some way. We in America have not yet found what our *minhag* is. What is it that expresses the particular flavor of religiosity that is American Judaism as it develops on our journey here?

We have more of the Ashkenazic *piyyutim* that were left out and we have put some of them back. We have also put in these new materials. We have put in some modern Israeli poetry. I believe that every generation has added its voice to the prayer book. What makes a prayer book a prayer book is that it is an anthology of every Jewish generation. The *siddur* is a color-coded book; there is material from every generation. If it

is going to be a living book, then our generation must be in there, too. We have not commissioned new poetry, but we have collected modern poetry.

Ours is a living book which is entirely traditional--yet in motion--and part of the continuing Jewish journey. One of the things that we asked of the people composing music was that the refrains be written in such a way that any *sheliah tsibbur* could start up the refrain and the congregation would immediately learn it. Our hope is that the music can work in two ways: it could be done as a very special piece; or the music could be done with a regular *sheliah tsibbur* who could lead the congregation in communal song.

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Someone asked why we need a new *mahzor*. We need a new *mahzor* because of the politics of the English language. Language changes very quickly and the English language has become very politicized. We wanted to have a gender-neutral translation so that a congregant could pick up the *mahzor* and not feel excluded. We also needed the new translation because of the certain style of Conservative prayer books. What the Reform movement chose to do was to change the liturgy. They chose to leave out everything in which they did not believe. What the Orthodox movement chose to do was to leave everything in and to translate it.

What the first generation of Conservative prayer books did was to leave everything in but not translate it. If you look at the theologically difficult parts of the service and look at what was done in the translation, there is sometimes very little relationship between the English and the Hebrew texts. The theory was that if they are going to read it in English, let them read it nicely, and they do not have to know that the Hebrew is something different. I think that this generation finds that intellectually unacceptable. I think that most congregants today want to know what is really there and then they can make a decision whether or not they believe it. This was one of the functions of the commentary, and this *mahzor* has a more literal translation than any of the first generation of Conservative prayer



books. Unfortunately, a literal translation might be theologically jarring, but we hope that it will arouse the congregation and that people will respond to it.

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### **Hazzan Joseph Levine**

And with those answers, our formal program comes to an end. But what we have witnessed here today, emotionally and intellectually will surely be duplicated in the hearts and minds of our congregants once the new *mahzor* is officially introduced. Thanks again to our participants and to you, my friends, for being so forthcoming in your response.

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